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**Education  
and the  
development  
of reason**

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*General Editor*

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# **Education and the development of reason**

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# Contents

	<b>Introduction</b>	<i>page</i> <b>xi</b>
	P. H. Hirst Professor of Education, University of Cambridge	
	<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Part I</b>	<b>A critique of current educational aims</b>	<b>i</b>
✓ 1	<b>Education and the educated man</b>	<b>3</b>
	R. S. Peters Professor of Philosophy of Education, University of London Institute of Education	
2	<b>Education: The engagement and its frustration</b>	<b>19</b>
	M. Oakeshott <i>Emeritus Professor of Politics, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London</i>	
• 3	<b>'Needs' in education</b>	<b>50</b>
	R. F. Dearden Department of Philosophy of Education, University of London Institute of Education	
✓ 4	<b>Education as a process of growth</b>	<b>65</b>
	R. F. Dearden	
• 5	<b>'Mental health' as an aim of education</b>	<b>85</b>
	J. Wilson Director, Farmington Trust Research Unit, Oxford	
• ✓ 6	<b>Happiness and education</b>	<b>95</b>
	R. F. Dearden	

✓ 7 Socialization and education 113

P. A. White

Department of Philosophy of Education, University of  
London Institute of Education

✓ 8 Creativity and education: 132

A philosophical analysis

J. P. White

Department of Philosophy of Education, University of  
London Institute of Education

Part 2 Reason 149

✓ 9 The concept of Reason 151

D. Pole

Department of Philosophy, King's College,  
University of London

10 A rational animal 176

G. Ryle

Emeritus Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy,  
University of Oxford

11 Reasonableness 194

M. Black

Director, The Society for the Humanities, Cornell University

12 Reason and passion 208

R. S. Peters

✓ 13 On belief 230

A. Phillips Griffiths

Professor of Philosophy, University of Warwick

✓ 14 Objectivity 246

D. W. Hamlyn

Professor of Philosophy, Birkbeck College, University of London

15 The Correspondence Theory of Truth 260

D. W. Hamlyn

16 The foundations of knowledge 275

A. Quinton

Fellow of New College, University of Oxford

## Contents

17	<b>Practical reason</b>	303
	R. Edgley Professor of Philosophy, University of Sussex	
18	<b>Reason and desire</b>	320
	J. D. Mabbott Formerly President, St John's College, University of Oxford	
19	<b>Reasons and causes</b>	332
	A. Phillips Griffiths	
20	<b>Belief and will</b>	348
	H. H. Price Emeritus Wykeham Professor of Logic, University of Oxford	
✓ 21	<b>Emotion</b>	368
	G. Pitcher Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University	
<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Education and reason</b>	389
✓ 22	<b>Liberal education and the nature of knowledge</b>	391
	P. H. Hirst	
✓ 23	<b>On teaching to be critical</b>	415
	J. Passmore Professor of Philosophy, Australian National University	
24	<b>Can virtue be taught?</b>	434
	G. Ryle	
✓ 25	<b>Autonomy and education</b>	448
	R. F. Dearden	
26	<b>The education of the emotions</b>	466
	R. S. Peters	
27	<b>The arts and the education of feeling and emotion</b>	484
	R. W. Hepburn Professor of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh	
✓ 28	<b>Education and human development</b>	501
	R. S. Peters	
	<b>Index</b>	521
		vii

## General editor's note

There is a growing interest in philosophy of education among students of philosophy as well as among those who are more specifically and practically concerned with educational problems. Philosophers, of course, from the time of Plato onwards, have taken an interest in education and have dealt with education in the context of wider concerns about knowledge and the good life. But it is only quite recently in this country that philosophy of education has come to be conceived of as a specific branch of philosophy like the philosophy of science or political philosophy.

To call philosophy of education a specific branch of philosophy is not, however, to suggest that it is a distinct branch in the sense that it could exist apart from established branches of philosophy such as epistemology, ethics and philosophy of mind. It would be more appropriate to conceive of it as drawing on established branches of philosophy and bringing them together in ways which are relevant to educational issues. In this respect the analogy with political philosophy would be a good one. Thus use can often be made of work that already exists in philosophy. In tackling, for instance, issues such as the rights of parents and children, punishment in schools and the authority of the teacher, it is possible to draw on and develop work already done by philosophers on 'rights', 'punishment' and 'authority'. In other cases, however, no systematic work exists in the relevant branches of philosophy—e.g. on concepts such as 'education', 'teaching', 'learning', 'indoctrination'. So philosophers of education have had to break new ground—in these cases in the philosophy of mind. Work on educational issues can also bring to life and throw new light on long-standing problems in philosophy. Concentration, for instance, on the particular predicament of children can throw new light on problems of punishment and responsibility. G. E. Moore's old worries about what *sorts of things* are good in themselves can be brought to life by urgent questions about the justification of the curriculum in schools.

There is a danger in philosophy of education, as in any other applied field, of polarization to one of two extremes. The work

could be practically relevant but philosophically feeble; or it could be philosophically sophisticated but remote from practical problems. The aim of the new International Library of the Philosophy of Education is to build up a body of fundamental work in this area which is both practically relevant and philosophically competent. For unless it achieves both types of objective it will fail to satisfy those for whom it is intended and fall short of the conception of philosophy of education which the International Library is meant to embody.

R.S.P.

# Introduction

P. H. Hirst

Anyone familiar with contemporary writing on education cannot but be aware of the almost total absence of literature discussing in an informed and sustained way the major aims of the educational enterprise. In certain respects this is not surprising. To say anything at all specific on such momentous issues seems to demand a breadth of knowledge and understanding few would dare to claim, and anyone having the temerity to make the necessary value judgments would thereby seem to brand himself as lacking the objectivity needed for the job. As a result, most writing concentrates on very particular aspects of education, either assuming a conventional set of overall aims, or making critical comments on such aims from a limited and often technical point of view. What is more, when discussion of general aims does become explicit, it is usually carried on in terms so ambiguous that few conclusions specific enough to have any practical significance can be drawn. Not surprisingly those concerned with educational planning find it extremely hard to keep the aims of the business clearly in focus and the paucity of rational discussion in this area leaves them largely without defence for what they do, at the mercy of pressure groups with very particular axes to grind. In this situation there would seem to be some value in collecting together in one volume those philosophical articles of a critical and constructive nature which seem, at least, to the editors, to have particular bearing on the formulation of educational aims. It is hoped that this will encourage more informed discussion and further positive contributions.

The papers in part 1 are concerned first with the appropriateness of characterizing education in terms of 'aims' and attempts there have been to see it instead either as a process of 'growth', or as the satisfaction of 'needs'. The overall inadequacy of these alternative approaches which emerges once the central concepts are at all carefully analysed, indicates the desirability of looking closely at those 'aims' which are suggested in contemporary discussion. There follows therefore a group of papers on the concepts of 'mental health', 'happiness', 'socialization' and 'creativity' which discuss

## *Introduction*

of this volume will serve to encourage further philosophical work on specifically educational issues which draws on the vast pool of highly relevant work that has been done in epistemology and philosophy of mind. The papers in part 3 do no more than indicate how a very small part of the work represented by the papers in part 2 can help our understanding of education.

This volume as a whole follows a very general pattern which fruitful work in philosophy of education has not infrequently assumed. Starting from problems of education, in this case the characterization of its aims, philosophical analysis thrusts us back onto work of much wider philosophical concern and interest. It is then only in the light of clarification at this level that we can return to the particular issues of the educational context to contribute, from a philosophical point of view, to the rational determination of educational practice. In spite of the recent considerable revival of interest in philosophy of education, philosophical resources are still only minimally harnessed to educational concerns. It is in the interests of promoting more sustained and fundamental study and the production of more positive contributions to work in this area that this volume has been compiled.

# Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the authors who have allowed us to include their work in this volume, and we are grateful to the editors and publishers who have granted us permission to reprint material previously published in their books or journals. The following lists indicate which papers are published here for the first time, and the sources of material which is being republished.

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**A critique of  
current  
educational aims**

part **I**

# Education and the educated man<sup>1</sup>

I

R. S. Peters

## The comparison with 'reform'

IN reflecting, in the past, on the sort of term that 'education' is I have usually likened it to 'reform'. Reforming people involves putting them in the way of experiences that, it is thought, will make them better. There is thus the idea of a family of processes whose principle of unity is the contribution to the very general end of being better. This is a very formal notion because 'better' has to be interpreted in terms of the valuations of the person using the term and a great number of processes might bring about the desired end. 'Education', I have argued, is a similar term, but more complex. It is similar because it suggests a family of processes whose principle of unity is the development of desirable qualities in someone. There are many processes, too, which might contribute to bringing about these valuable qualities and 'valuable' would have to be interpreted in terms of the valuations of the person, or group of people, using the word. 'Aims' of education are attempts to specify more precisely what these desirable qualities are, e.g. critical thought, integrity of character, being creative and the like.

The differences between the two terms are, it was suggested, as follows:

1. 'Reform' suggests that a person has lapsed from some standard of approved behaviour. 'Education', on the other hand, has no such suggestion. It often consists of putting people in the way of values of which they have never dreamt.

2. 'Reform' suggests a limited operation. Making a boy more prudent would almost count as reforming him if he found difficulty in delaying gratification. 'Education' is not so limited. Indeed it suggests passing on the ultimate values of a community, so that the individual can make them his own.

3. 'Education' suggests not only that what develops in someone is valuable but also that it involves the development of knowledge and understanding. Whatever else an educated person is, he is one who has some understanding of something.

He is not just a person who has know-how or a knack. There is also the suggestion that this understanding should not be too narrowly specialized. This led me to suggest that the saying that 'education is of the whole man' is a conceptual truth in that being educated is incompatible with being narrowly specialized.

There are all sorts of further questions which arise from this analysis—e.g. about whether there are any conceptual as distinct from moral limits which could be set to what is to count as a process of education; about the ethical justification of our views about what is desirable, and about what are ethically defensible methods of passing it on and distributing it. With these I am not here concerned; for I want to confine myself to asking prior questions about whether any conditions that begin to look like logically necessary conditions for the correct application of the term 'education' have been provided.

### Objections to cognitive conditions

Counter-examples can be produced to this analysis, some of which are more difficult to deal with than others. Let us consider first some objections to the cognitive conditions:

1. We can talk of specialized education. This objection can be met by saying that often, when we have multiple conditions, we can withdraw one of them by using a countermanding word. For instance people speak of knowing things 'intuitively', where 'intuitively' countermands one of the usual conditions of 'knowledge', namely that we have grounds for what we believe. Similarly 'specialized' could be regarded as withdrawing one of the conditions of 'education'.

2. We might talk of Spartan education or of education in some even more primitive tribe when we knew that they had nothing to pass on except simple skills and folk-lore. This could be met, perhaps, by saying either that we were extending the term analogically, as when we talk about dogs being neurotic (although it is interesting to note that we do not now talk of the education of animals), or that the word 'education' was being used with reliance purely on the first condition, in the sense of bringing up their children in what is thought to be valuable, or that the word 'education' was being misused. We might also note that the job which words do is relative to the conceptual structure of the people who employ them. For people who have not advanced to the level where they make a

distinction between 'education' and 'training' or 'bringing up', one word might function in a much more undifferentiated way. And even for people who have developed a more precise way of using words the same words are sometimes used in the more general way in which they were once used. Nevertheless this counter-example is a difficult one to meet.

### **The value-condition the only one?**

Some might regard this counter-example as decisive and go on to suggest a simplified analysis of the concept of 'education' along the following lines. They might argue that the value condition of 'education' is the only one which is, properly speaking, a logically necessary condition. The basic notion involved in 'education', it might be maintained, is that of the development of desirable qualities in people. As a matter of contingent fact we value knowledge and breadth of understanding. The supposed knowledge conditions, therefore, are not properly logical conditions of 'education' but contingent on our particular valuations. On this view an educated person would be one who pursues things that are valuable. He is a person who has become committed to a certain way of life that is valued by society and his education has succeeded in getting him into this state. In our contemporary culture the things judged valuable are centred on knowledge and understanding either in the sense that value is attached to various forms of the pursuit of truth or in the sense that other valuable things—e.g. sex, eating, gardening—are more highly valued if they are pursued in a sensitive, discriminating or informed way. The notion, therefore, of being 'educated' has become contingently but firmly associated with knowledge and understanding. This means that, because we judge knowledge and understanding to be valuable, a concept, which in other contexts may be associated with other valuable pursuits, is for us associated with what is related to knowledge and understanding. We might have put other things of value under this concept but we have not in fact done so. Some people in our culture do, perhaps, put other things under this concept. So their concept of being educated includes things like being clean, tidy and speaking with a nice accent. If, however, they do not regard knowledge and understanding as valuable at all, then they give quite a different content to the concept of being educated, for their values are quite different.

Let us now briefly examine the plausibility of this way of simplifying the analysis:

1. Its strongest point is that it gets rid of the problems connected with talking about Spartan education. The Spartans had a system

of values in which knowledge and understanding were not valued very highly. An educated Spartan, on this view, would not be a rarity but a Spartan who had become, by his upbringing, committed to some things that are valuable but not to knowledge and understanding.

2. Another argument in favour of this view is that 'education' certainly has a use in which it suggests the commitment to what is thought to be of value which has been brought about by some process of initiation. There are some, for instance, who are insensitive to the values inherent in a game like golf. Perhaps they think of it as a good walk spoilt; perhaps, because of their unfortunate upbringing, they associate it with the upper class—like polo and riding to hounds. I might well say to such a philistine that he just was not educated. If I said this I don't think I would necessarily be drawing attention to his ignorance of the history of the game, to the fact that in the country of its origin it is as much a people's game as football. What I think I would be suggesting is that he was not on the inside of it at all, that he had failed to see what there was in it. He had not been initiated. Similarly when we say that a person has uneducated tastes do we mean necessarily that he does not value knowledge and understanding either for their own sake or as ingredients in whatever tastes he has? Or do we mean that his tastes are, in our view, for all the wrong things?

What I think we are pointing to in cases such as these is the absence of the sort of knowledge which presented such a problem in Greek ethics—the knowledge of what is good. This consists of seeing things under certain aspects which constitute intrinsic reasons for engaging in them. It is impossible here to go into all the complications involved in this sort of knowledge. It is, as Socrates and Plato argued, intimately connected with caring about something and does not seem to be a case either of 'knowing how' or of 'knowing that' which are the usual alternatives offered. But it may well be that when we talk about people being educated we sometimes have this sort of value commitment in mind. So this sort of case would seem to support the connexion of 'education' with the value condition and its separation from the knowledge condition if the latter is just interpreted as suggesting depth and breadth of understanding.

There are, however, objections of varying degrees of seriousness not just to making the value condition the logically fundamental one but to regarding it as a logically necessary condition *at all* for the application of the term 'education'. They are as follows:

1. We often talk of the educational system of a country without commending what others seem concerned to pass on. This objection

can be met by citing the parallel of talking about the moral code of another community or of a sub-culture within our own. Once we understand from our own case how terms such as 'educate' and 'moral' function we can use them in an external descriptive sort of way as do anthropologists, economists and the like. We can also use them in what Hare has called a 'quotes' sense.<sup>2</sup>

2. We can talk of poor education or bad education. This can be met by saying that we are suggesting that the job is being botched or that the values with which it is concerned are not up to much—though it is a nice point when we would pass from saying that it is bad education to saying that it is not education at all.

3. A very serious objection, however, to this way of simplifying the analysis is that many people regard being educated as a bad state to be in. Their objection is not just to a particular system of education but to *any* sort of education. Perhaps they associate it with books and theories and fail to appreciate the various ways in which knowledge can transform people's lives. Nevertheless they are contemptuous of all its manifestations ranging from literature to heart-surgery and going to the moon. They think that people are better off without it. They would not describe bringing up their children in the fear of the Lord and in the ways of their forefathers as education. So they would not, in their use of the term, retain any association between education and what they thought valuable. For them it would be connected with what others try to do to them and to their children which had some intimate connexion with knowledge. And they might not themselves have a specific concept to differentiate the handing on of what they thought valuable, let alone a specific word to mark it.

### **The cognitive conditions fundamental?**

The suggestion that one condition, namely the valuative one, might be the only proper logical condition, and that the cognitive conditions might be thought of as contingent on our valuations, is an ingenious one, though it is faced with the problem raised at the end which is posed by those who do not value education at all. But it might equally well be suggested that the cognitive conditions might be the only proper logical conditions and the valuative condition contingent on them.<sup>3</sup> This might prove to be no better and no worse a way of simplifying the analysis. On this view the fundamental notion involved in being educated would be that of having knowledge and understanding. Because knowledge and understanding are valued in our culture, both for their own sake and for what they contribute to technology and to our quality of life generally,

being educated has come to be thought of as a highly desirable state to be in.

This way of simplifying the analysis has much to commend it:

1. It certainly takes care of those who regard education as a bad thing. As, on this view, the connexion between education and something that is valued depends only on the *contingent* fact that people value knowledge and understanding, it is not surprising that simple people or hard-headed practical men are against it. For it seems to serve no useful function in their lives; indeed it may be seen as an influence that is likely to undermine their way of life. If they see that it may help them to run a farm or to cure a disease they may accord a limited value to it, but only of an instrumental type.

2. There would be no need to make any elaborate philosophical moves to deal with cases where we speak of education and educational systems without approving or disapproving of what goes on. Education would be, as indeed it is sometimes called, the 'knowledge industry'. We could talk of it in the same way as we talk of any other set of practices that we might or might not think important.

3. 'Poor' or 'bad' education would simply mark the efficiency with which knowledge was handed on or the worth of the type of knowledge that was handed on.

The main objection to this alternative is the fact that 'education' is, or has been, used without this conceptual connexion which is suggested with knowledge. The Latin word 'educere' was usually, though not always, used of physical development. In Silver Latin 'educare' was used of the rearing of plants and animals as well as children. In English the word was originally used just to talk in a very general way about the bringing up of children and animals. In the seventeenth century, for instance, harts were said to delight in woods and places of their first education. The word was often used of animals and birds that were trained by human beings such as hounds and falcons. In the nineteenth century it was even used of silk-worms! (See *O.E.D.*) Nowadays we sometimes use it in this general way as when, for instance, we talk about Spartan education or when we use it of our own forms of training which do not have any close connexion with knowledge and understanding. In other words, the older use still survives.

## *Education and the educated man*

and with the sort of training and instruction that went on in special institutions. This large-scale change, culminating in the development of compulsory schooling for all, may well have brought about such a radical conceptual tightening up that we now tend to use the word only in connexion with the development of knowledge and understanding. We distinguish now between 'training' and 'education', whereas previously people did not. We would not now naturally speak of educating animals and we would never speak in this way of plants. But we do speak of training animals and of training roses and other sorts of plants.

We thus seem to have reached an impasse in our attempts to simplify the analysis, whichever way we attempt to do it. For there are considerations that pull in both directions. There is, however, another etymological point which might help to explain some of the difficulties which surround this concept and which might shed some light on how this impasse can be avoided.

## **Education and the educated man**

A little research in the *O.E.D.* reveals that the notion of 'educated' as characterizing the all-round development of a person morally, intellectually and spiritually emerged only in the nineteenth century. It was also in this century that the distinction between education and training came to be made explicitly. This use was very much connected with instruction by means of which desirable mental qualities were thought to be produced, as well as with the drawing out and development of qualities thought to be potential in a person. The term, however, continued to be used, as it had previously been used, to refer to the rearing and bringing up of children and animals, as well as to the sort of instruction that went on in schools. In other words, though before the nineteenth century there had been the ideal of the cultivated person, who was the product of elaborate training and instruction, the term 'an educated man' was not the usual one for drawing attention to this ideal. They had the concept but they did not use the word 'educated' quite with these overtones. Education, therefore, was not thought of explicitly as a family of processes which have as their outcome the development of an educated man in the way in which it is now.

Nowadays, especially in educational circles, the concept of an educated man as an ideal has very much taken root. It is natural, therefore, for those working in educational institutions to conceive of what they are doing as being connected with the development of such a person. They have become very sensitive to the difference between working with this ideal in mind and having limited and



specific goals, for which they use the word 'training'. Witness, for instance, the change in nomenclature, following the Robbins Report, from Training Colleges to Colleges of Education. Witness, too, the change from Physical Training to Physical Education. In brief, because of the development of the concept of an 'educated man', the concept of 'education' has become tightened up on account of its natural association with the development of such a person. We distinguish educating people from training them because for us education is no longer compatible with any narrowly conceived enterprise.

Now in the analysis which I have previously given of 'education' as being comparable to 'reform' I have always assumed this connexion between 'education' and the development of an educated man. I have admitted that other people may not have developed this more differentiated type of conceptual structure, but I have insisted that it is important to make these distinctions even if people do not use terms in a specific enough way to mark them out.<sup>4</sup> But perhaps I did not appreciate how widespread the older use of 'education' is in which there is no such tight connexion between various processes of bringing up and rearing and the development of an educated man. It may well be that many people still use the word 'education' to cover not only any process of instruction, training, etc. that goes on in schools but also less formalized child-rearing practices such as toilet-training, getting children to be clean and tidy and to speak with a nice accent. I do not think, however, that the word is now used, except semi-humorously, to talk about the training of animals, and I have never heard it used to honour the labours of gardeners with their plants. At least the concept has shifted more or less universally in these respects from that of the seventeenth century.

What light, then, does this general point derived from etymology throw on the two alternative proposals for simplifying the analysis of 'education' that were suggested? It depends, I think, whether we are concerned with the analysis of 'education' or with that of 'an educated man'. If we are concerned with the analysis of 'education', then I think that the first alternative is the obvious one. 'Education' was originally used to mark out any process of rearing, bringing up, instructing, etc. As those who engaged in this would not have bothered had they not thought that some importance attached to what was being passed on, there must always have been some loose kind of connexion between these processes and conceptions of what was valuable. It is doubtful, however, whether at this stage the connexion could be thought of as a conceptual one; for at a stage when 'bringing up' is just one of the functions of the family and not a

function of special educational institutions, it is unlikely that much thought is given to what is really worth passing on and what is not. Education, therefore, must have included passing on things that were thought valuable, but probably also included a lot of other things that were of little importance. With the coming of industrialism, however, an increasing value came to be placed on literacy, numeracy, knowledge and skill; so, with the widespread development of special institutions to pass on this growing inheritance, education came to be associated very closely with the various processes of instruction which went on in such institutions. So close has this association become that it is now possible for some people, who do not value anything to do with books or theory, to say that they do not value education. Many others, however, who do value it, do not necessarily do so because they view it as leading up to the production of an educated man. They value it because it has now become the royal road to better jobs and to getting on in the world.

If, however, we start, as I did, from the analysis of what it means to be 'educated' and view education as the family of processes which contribute to this outcome, then the association both with knowledge and with all-round development takes over. The value condition is indissolubly connected with this; for the notion of an educated man functions as an ideal for those who view education as being concerned with the development of such a person. This ideal emerged into prominence when the importance of specialized knowledge became manifest in the nineteenth century. As a reaction against utilitarian specialization it upheld the value both of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and of all-round understanding and development. At that time there was still prevalent among educated people a contempt for trade and technology. Because, too, practical pursuits, such as farming and cooking, were usually conceived of instrumentally, they were not regarded as central to the life of an educated person, though they might be indulged in as hobbies. The Greek ideal persisted of a man who was freed from coarsening contact with the materials of the earth and who developed knowledge both for its own sake and in order to control himself and other men. Once, however, especially through the influence of the romantic protest, the practical became dissociated from the instrumental, it became possible to accord intrinsic value to a range of disinterested pursuits in addition to the pursuit of knowledge. Thus our concept of an educated person is of someone who is capable of delighting in a variety of pursuits and projects for their own sake and whose pursuit of them and general conduct of his life are transformed by some degree of all-round understanding and sensitivity. Pursuing the practical is not necessarily a

disqualification for being educated; for the practical need not be pursued under a purely instrumental aspect. This does not mean, of course, that an educated man is oblivious to the instrumental value of pursuits—e.g. of science. It means only that he does not view them purely under this aspect. Neither does it mean that he has no specialized knowledge; it means only that he is not just a narrow-minded specialist.

It is one thing to argue that, because the concept of an educated man came into prominence at a certain time as an ideal, the value condition must necessarily be satisfied; but it is quite another matter to outline the precise ways in which such an outcome is valuable. Obviously being educated is a desirable state to be in, for those for whom it functions as an ideal, because of the ways in which value can be ascribed to the pursuit and possession of knowledge—i.e. as an absorbing and challenging activity, as illuminating other pursuits, and as incorporating the intrinsic value of truth. But what is to be said, ethically speaking, about the non-instrumental aspect of being an educated man? It could be argued that value must be ascribed to this because the capacity for appreciating activities in this way is central to being on the inside of them and doing them for their own sake. But this form of appreciation would have to be distinguished from more brutish and unreflective enjoyment—e.g. of food, sex, etc. And it might be argued that the difference in levels of enjoyment is due to the presence or absence of a kind of knowledge which Plato and Socrates called 'knowledge of the good'. If this were the case the valuative aspect also of 'being educated' would be dependent upon a knowledge condition, though the knowledge would be of a different type from that involved in depth and breadth of understanding. Socrates and Plato, it might be argued, provided the clue to this sort of knowledge in their thinking about the arts; for they connected knowledge in this sphere with sensitization to standards intrinsic to a pursuit or a project. As Socrates pointed out, in his answer to Thrasymachus, anyone who is skilled in anything has regard for the standards which are constitutive of excellence in his art. He does not just know *about* them; he also cares about them and is committed to them. This notion of sensitization to standards, which are connected with the point of the activity, provides a common element in both theoretical and practical pursuits. For to engage in a theoretical pursuit is not just to engage in idle or sporadic curiosity; it is rather to have regard to standards of clarity, relevance, consistency and correctness, which are intimately connected with the pursuit of truth. Practical pursuits involve such standards as well, in so far as they are transformed by theoretical understanding; but they also involve additional stan-

dards derivative from the practical purposes which they embody. Being educated, therefore, involves a capacity for absorption and enjoyment which is connected with sensitization to standards which structure activities and pursuits.

If the Socratic conception of 'knowledge of the good' provides the key to the analysis of the non-instrumental aspect of 'being educated', then knowledge enters into the concept of being an educated person in three ways, namely depth of knowledge or theoretical understanding, breadth of knowledge involved in all-round development and in 'cognitive perspective', and 'knowledge of the good'. The value condition of 'being educated' would therefore be dependent upon various aspects of knowledge conditions. The question might then be asked, however, whether the kind of non-instrumental attitude involved in 'knowledge of the good' bestows value on a state of mind irrespective of the pursuit in which it is exercised. A golfer might exhibit such an attitude, but would this bestow value on his state irrespective of the value of golf as an activity? Or does the value of golf and other activities depend upon the opportunities which its standards provide for skill, precision, foresight, resourcefulness and so on? And what about the problem posed by anti-social activities such as burglary? Do we jib at the suggestion that burglary might be one of the pursuits of an educated person because, as a matter of contingent fact, most people do it for gain rather than for love? Or do we rule it out simply because its anti-social character shows lack of all-round development?

Questions like these are pertinent not just to the analysis of 'being educated' but to ethical theory generally. They are similar to problems presented by cases of, for example, autonomous or conscientious men who display these qualities of mind in activities that seem trivial or anti-social. Additional value, of course, accrues to activities in so far as they fall under interpersonal moral principles such as justice, benevolence and freedom, or in so far as they involve the value of truth. The question is only about the possibility of there being a distinct source of value which can be attached to qualities of mind, which can be exhibited in a vast range of activities which may or may not fall under such other principles, e.g. games. This is an issue of considerable importance in the context of educating a whole nation; for there are many who are not likely to go far with theoretical enquiries and who are unlikely to develop much depth or breadth of understanding to underpin and transform their dealings as workers, husbands and fathers. But there are many challenging and skilful activities in which they can delight, irrespective of the money or fame which they might bring. And not all such activities are of manifest social importance.

Such problems posed by the concept of 'being educated' were, of course, immanent in the previous analysis of the concept of 'education'. But the breaking of the connexion, which I assumed, between 'education' and the development of an 'educated man', has helped to focus attention on them, especially in relation to the importance of the different ways in which knowledge enters into this analysis. The breaking of this connexion has also helped to explain uneasiness which I have always felt about previous ways of answering objections to the old analysis which presupposed this connexion. For instance, as can be seen from 2 on p. 4, there is the difficulty presented by the fact that we talk quite naturally about Spartan education. Now it would be almost a contradiction to speak of an educated Spartan; for 'educated', as qualifying a person, keeps its association with 'an educated man', and one of the things which we know about most of the Spartans is that they were not educated men. Nevertheless they did have various methods of rigorously disciplining and training their children. 'Spartan education', therefore, sounds quite all right because we are relying on the original more generalized concept. Similarly 'specialized education' can be dealt with more simply than by suggesting a parallel with 'intuitive knowledge'. For it has always been customary, in the generalized use of 'education', to particularize the area in which training or instruction was concentrated. So there would be nothing inappropriate in talking either about special education or general education. There does seem to be a difference, too, between asking whether a person has been educated and whether he is an educated man; for the former could be taken as meaning just 'Has he been to school?' whereas the latter suggests much more than this.

Making a distinction between these two concepts of 'education' also enables me to deal with the dissatisfaction felt about certain things that I have said about aims of education. Processes of education, I have argued, are those that lead up to the development of an educated person; so statements about *the* aim of education must be tautological or function as persuasive definitions. For if we say something very general, such as that the aim of education is the development of desirable states of mind in people, this is like saying that the aim of reform is to make men better. Similarly if it is said that *the* aim of education is to initiate people into what is worthwhile with some depth and breadth of understanding, it is almost tautological. If something more specific is put in, such as to make men God-fearing citizens, then the statement of the aim is beginning to function as a persuasive definition. Statements about *x's* aim, or about *an* aim, on the other hand, specify more precisely the particular qualities that are taken to be the attributes of an educated

man—e.g. critical thinking, integrity of character, etc. So any statement about an aim, or about x's aim of education, emphasizes features of a person that are part of the understanding of what it means for him to be 'educated'. Of anything that we can call an aim of education we can also say 'So that's what you take an educated person to be like'. This analysis is corroborated by the fact that we do not speak of educating people for, in, or as anything specific; when we want to specify occupational goals which may or may not be compatible with educating people, we speak of training them—e.g. for business, in carpentry, as dentists. Sometimes it is said that we educate people for life. But this vacuous kind of completion can be interpreted as a way of trying to fit the generality suggested by 'educated' into an instrumental type of mould.

These conceptual points about aims of education are pertinent if we are thinking about processes of education as those that are involved in the development of an educated person. If, on the other hand, we are relying on the more general notion of 'education' as one that indiscriminately marks out a vast range of practices concerned with bringing up, rearing, instructing, etc., we might think instrumentally of education—i.e. we might not connect it with purposes that are part of our concept of an educated person. We might talk of 'driver education' or of education being a good investment because it increases productivity. I do not think that we would say that we were educating someone for business or to be a dentist, because we would be looking at the process from the inside, and when we take up this stance the associations of trying to produce an educated person take over. But we might say, more from the outside, that an aim of education is to get a better job. In other words I do not think that we tend to use 'educate' as a task-verb without thinking of the various achievements connected with being an educated man. But we do use it descriptively, from the outside, in a way which links what is going on with goals which are extrinsic to our concept of an educated person. Talking about an 'educational' process suggests much less than talking about an 'educative' one.

In brief the distinction between 'education' as used by those who think of what is going on as leading up to the emergence of an educated person and between 'education' as a word still used, as it was once entirely used, to refer to a vast range of practices concerned with bringing up children, is an important one. Making this distinction helps to clarify the ways in which we use the term 'education' and takes care of most of the problems that arise if all uses are analysed with the model in mind of 'education' being a term like 'reform'. It also preserves whatever was of value in the previous analysis.

## The limitation and point of analysis

It might be asked what the point is of attempting to sort out these two concepts of 'education', especially when the more specific concept of 'education' retains much of its old indeterminacy. There is point, I think, because there are these two concepts in current use and, if one believes in the values associated with the second, more specific concept, any attempt to make these values more explicit not only aids clarity, which is a cardinal intellectual virtue, but also may do something to shift people's attention towards giving due weight to them. It does not seem to me that, at this particular juncture of history, there is much danger of people losing sight of the mundane, instrumentally-oriented operations which the term 'education' has traditionally covered. On the contrary my impression is that people are only too prone to view education in an instrumental way. Education is very much in the public eye, but, from my point of view, for very limited reasons. I suppose that governments see it mainly as the source of trained manpower and that the average man sees it as the vehicle of social mobility. There is also a growing tendency to use the word 'education' to up-grade mundane activities by trading on the values associated with being an educated man. Driving instruction, for instance, becomes 'driver-education' without any radical transformation of the nature of the courses provided. To draw attention, therefore, to the connexion between 'education' and the ideal outcome of an 'educated man', and to maintain that we ought to use words like 'training' or 'instruction' when we do not connect what we are doing with such an ideal, are aids to communication in the service of an overall ideal.

But, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, conceptual analysis leaves everything as it is. For the question remains whether it is desirable to lay stress on knowledge and understanding in this way, to be concerned about all-round development and intrinsic motivation. To deal with issues of this sort we have to go into ethics and social philosophy as well as into an empirical analysis of the contemporary situation. Conceptual analysis can of itself contribute little to answering such questions, but it can pose them in a more precise form. The issues arising from this analysis are predominantly ethical, but arise in a specific enough manner to avoid many of the most boring and unprofitable aspects of recent ethical discussion—e.g. about whether ethical discourse must be 'prescriptive', and about whether there are any formal ways of delimiting the domain of 'the moral'. We are taken straight into the heart of live ethical discussion, which is concerned with the *content* of what is valuable. The following types of question are posed:

1. In the realm of 'the good' what makes pursuits so worthwhile that children should be initiated into them? Is their worthwhileness a function of the manner in which they can be pursued (e.g. with love, with regard to the standards immanent in them, with intelligence, resourcefulness, courage, etc.) or are there other grounds for saying that some pursuits are more worthwhile than others, excluding their relationship to interpersonal principles?

2. What sort of justification can be given for the pursuit and possession of knowledge and understanding? Is it a *different* type of justification than that given for the pursuit of other worthwhile activities? Is, for instance, some form of transcendental justification possible for the pursuit of knowledge in addition to the types of justification dealt with under 1.? What value can be assigned to breadth as distinct from depth of knowledge? What status is to be ascribed to the sort of knowledge which Socrates referred to as 'knowledge of the good'?

3. If knowledge is thought to enhance the value of practical pursuits does the 'enhancement' derive from the sort of value dealt with in 1.? Or does it derive from some source independent of 1. dealt with in 2. which is concerned with the peculiar status of truth as a value?

4. What relationship do values dealt with in 1. have with human excellences such as autonomy, integrity, courage, etc.?

5. What relationship do values of type 1. and 4. have with interpersonal principles such as justice and the consideration of interests?

Hare once claimed that, if moral philosophers addressed themselves to the question 'How shall I bring up my children?', many of the dark corners in ethics might thereby be illuminated.<sup>5</sup> He was thinking more of the realm of interpersonal principles than of that of 'the good'; but the question is equally pertinent in both realms. My claim is that this fresh attempt at the analysis of the concept of 'education' does something to present in a more specific way the tasks that lie ahead which are of central importance not just for the philosophy of education but for ethical theory in general.

## Notes

1 My thanks are due to the Australian National University for the facilities provided for me as a Visiting Fellow which enabled me to write this paper and to Geoffrey Mortimore of the Philosophy department at the A.N.U. for his constructive comments on a first draft of it.

2 R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals*, O.U.P., 1952, pp. 124-6.



- 3 I owe this suggestion to Mrs Nancy Glock who first put it to me in a very persuasive way in a seminar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in March 1968.
- 4 R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education*, Allen & Unwin, 1966, pp. 29-30.
- 5 R. M. Hare, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-5.

# Education: The engagement and its frustration

2

M. Oakeshott

EDUCATION in its most general significance may be recognized as a specific transaction which may go on between the generations of human beings in which newcomers to the scene are initiated into the world they are to inhabit. Thus, for example, when in a late-medieval formulation of the duties of human beings there appeared the precept that parents should educate their children, education was being recognized as a moral transaction, something that may (but ought not to) be neglected, and distinguished from the unavoidable natural processes in which all living things grow up and either accommodate themselves to their circumstances or perish.

Consequently education is recognized as something to be thought about; and in the course of reflection two topics in particular have emerged. The first is concerned to distinguish this transaction, to discern what is going on in it, to identify the relationships it involves, in short, to understand it as a specific human engagement. The concern here might be said to be with the question 'What is the character of the world which a human newcomer is to inhabit?' The second is the consideration of the procedures, methods and devices believed to be appropriate to the engagement. The second of these topics is clearly subordinate to the first, and all who have thought profoundly about it have recognized this subordination. I shall have little to say about it, except to notice, later on, how in recent times procedures and devices have broken loose from this subordination and have imposed themselves upon our understanding of the transaction itself, with unfortunate consequences. My concern is with the first of these topics. I want to display education as a human engagement of a certain kind and as a transaction upon which a recognizably human life depends for its continuance; and I want, then, to go on to consider some of the obstacles which now hinder and may even frustrate this transaction.

Human beings are what they understand themselves to be; they are composed entirely of beliefs about themselves and about the world they inhabit. They inhabit a world of intelligibles, that is, a world

composed, not of physical objects, but of occurrences which have meanings and are recognized in manners to which there are alternatives. Their contingent situations in this world are, therefore, what they understand them to be, and they respond to them by choosing to say or to do *this* rather than *that* in relation to imagined and wished-for outcomes. They are creatures of want. Their wants are not biological impulses or genetic urges; they are imagined satisfactions, which have reasons but not causes, and are eligible to be wished-for, chosen, pursued, procured, approved or disapproved.

A human life is composed of performances, and each performance is a disclosure of a man's beliefs about himself and the world and an exploit in self-enactment. He is what he becomes; he has a history but no 'nature'. This history is not an evolutionary process or a teleological engagement; there is no 'ultimate man' hidden in the womb of time or prefigured in the characters who now walk the world. Human beings pursue satisfactions which they believe to be desirable, but human conduct is not the flowering of a settled potentiality.

The wished-for satisfactions of human beings lie, for the most part, in the responses their utterances and actions receive from others, responses which are themselves utterances and actions related to the wished-for satisfactions of those who make them. Thus, human satisfactions are the outcome of transactions, and to seek them is to enter into a relation with another or with others. These associations are not physical 'interactions', like chemical processes; they are chosen and understood relationships. Human beings do not merely 'communicate' with one another; they speak words which have meanings and are understood (or misunderstood) by those to whom they speak. To hear is to listen, and to listen is to think; and the responses they make to one another are replies or rejoinders governed by the wished-for satisfactions of those who make them. Thus, human conduct subscribes to procedures, but it does not constitute processes. These procedures are not causes which determine what is said or done; they are composed of rules and rule-like considerations to be subscribed to in choosing what to say or to do. They are, moreover, multiple (there is no one comprehensive procedure to correspond to the word 'society' as it is commonly used); and each is an historic achievement which might have been different from what it is and which requires to be understood in order to be used in conduct.

Being human is recognizing oneself to be related to others, not as the parts of an organism are related, nor as members of a single, all-inclusive 'society', but in virtue of participation in multiple understood relationships and in the enjoyment of understood,

historic languages of feelings, sentiments, imaginings, fancies, desires, recognitions, moral and religious beliefs, intellectual and practical enterprises, customs, conventions, procedures and practices; canons, maxims and principles of conduct, rules which denote obligations and offices which specify duties. These languages are continuously invented by those who share them; using them is adding to their resources. They do not impose demands to think or to 'behave' in a certain manner; they are not sets of ready-made formulae of self-disclosure and self-enactment; they reach those who share them as various invitations to understand, to admire, to approve or to disapprove; and they come only in being learned.

In short, a human being is the inhabitant of a world composed, not of 'things', but of meanings; that is, of occurrences in some manner recognized, identified, understood and responded to in terms of this understanding. It is a world of sentiments and beliefs, and it includes also human artefacts (such as books, pictures, musical compositions, tools and utensils) for these, also, are 'expressions' which have meanings and which require to be understood in order to be used or enjoyed. To be without this understanding is to be, not a human being, but a stranger to the human condition.

Now, I have begun with this characterization of a human life because, if it were not like this, education would be a redundant engagement. If a human life were a process of growth in which a potential became an actual, or if it were a process in which an organism reacted to its circumstances in terms of a genetic equipment, there would be no room for a transaction between the generations designed expressly to initiate a newcomer into what was going on and thus enable him to participate in it. But such is not the case. A human life is composed of performances, choices to do *this* rather than *that* in relation to imagined and wished-for outcomes and governed by beliefs, opinions, understandings, practices, procedures, rules and recognitions of desirabilities and undesirabilities, impossible to engage in merely in virtue of a genetic equipment and without learning to do so. Even the dexterities of human beings have to be learned because they, like everything else in a human life, are governed by desirabilities. For a child to learn to walk is not like a fledgling taking to the air: do I not remember being told to 'walk properly' and not shamble along as if I were an ape? The March hare's dance and the song of a blackbird may be attributed to genetic urges, but a waltz and *Dove sono* are historic human inventions which have to be learned and understood if they are to be known, enjoyed or responded to. In short, the educational engagement is necessary because nobody is born a human being, and

because the quality of being human is not a latency which becomes an actuality in a process of 'growth'. The human newcomer is not an organism in search of an accommodation to circumstances favourable to its continued existence; he is *homo discens*, a creature capable of learning to think, to understand and to enact himself in a world of human enactments and thus to *acquire* a human character.

In considering what is going on in this transaction between the generations, then, the first thing to recognize is that it is a transaction between human beings and postulants to a human condition in which newcomers are initiated into an inheritance of human achievements of understanding and belief.

If this inheritance were composed of natural 'things' or artefacts, then its transmission would be hardly more than a mechanical formality, a handing over of physical objects. But it is not. It is composed of human activities, aspirations, sentiments, images, opinions, beliefs, modes of understanding, customs and practices; in short, states of mind which may be entered into only in a procedure of learning.

If this inheritance were merely states of mind, then the initiation might be achieved by hypnosis, by therapy, by means of subcutaneous injections or electric shocks or in so-called 'sleep learning'. But it is not. It is composed of states of mind which, because they constitute understandings, can be enjoyed only by virtue of their being themselves understood. To be human is to engage in activities knowing what you are doing, and consequently initiation into this condition can be only in an engagement in which the newcomer learns to understand.

What is going on in this transaction, then, is not the transfer of the products of earlier generations to a newcomer, nor is it a newcomer acquiring an aptitude for imitating current adult human performances; it is learning to perform humanly. Education is not acquiring a stock of ready-made ideas, images, sentiments, beliefs etc.; it is learning to look, to listen, to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe, to understand, to choose and to wish. It is a postulant to a human condition learning to recognize himself as a human being in the only way in which this is possible; namely, by seeing himself in the mirror of an inheritance of human understandings and activities and thus himself acquiring (in the words of Leibniz) the character of *un miroir circant, doué d'action interne*, acquiring the ability to throw back upon the world his own version of a human being in conduct which is both a self-disclosure and a self-enactment.

This transaction between the generations will, however, be inhibited unless there is a contingent belief in the worth of what is

### *Education: The engagement and its frustration*

to be mediated to the newcomer, and unless this conviction is somehow, also, transmitted. Everything human exists in terms of the recognition of its desirability, and this civilized inheritance, this world of meanings and understandings, will be transmitted only where it inspires the gratitude, the pride and even the veneration of those who already enjoy it, where it endows them with an identity they esteem, and where it is understood as a repeated summons rather than a possession, an engagement rather than an heirloom.

I am not concerned with that mysterious accommodation to the world which constitutes the early history of a human being; activity emerging imperceptibly and intermittently from passivity; movements becoming actions; urges giving place to wants and wants to choices; presentations becoming re-presentations, remembered, recollected, recognized and gradually identified; occurrences coming to be recognized as events; 'things' emerging from characteristics; 'objects' perceived as signs and signs revealing alternative significances; sounds coming to be recognized as words with meanings determined by contexts; human procedures distinguished from natural processes—all the fluctuations which go on in the morning twilight of childhood, where there is nothing that, at a given moment, a clever child may be said exactly to know or not to know.

At home in the nursery, or in the kindergarten, in the early years of childhood, attention and activity, when they begin to be self-moved, are, for the most part, ruled by inclination; the self is inclination. Things and occurrences (even when they have been expressly designed or arranged by adults) are gifts of fortune known only in terms of what can be made of them. Everything is an opportunity, recognized and explored for the immediate satisfaction it may be made to yield. Learning, here, is a by-product of play; what is learned is what may happen to be learned.

But education, properly speaking, begins when, upon these casual encounters provoked by the contingencies of moods, upon these fleeting wants and sudden enthusiasms tied to circumstances, there supervenes the deliberate initiation of a newcomer into a human inheritance of sentiments, beliefs, imaginings, understandings and activities. It begins when the transaction becomes 'schooling' and when learning becomes learning by study, and not by chance, in conditions of direction and restraint. It begins with the appearance of a teacher with something to impart which is not immediately connected with the current wants or 'interests' of the learner.

The idea 'School' is, in the first place, that of a serious and

orderly initiation into an intellectual, imaginative, moral and emotional inheritance; an initiation designed for children who are ready to embark upon it. Superimposed upon these chance encounters with fragments of understanding, these moments of unlooked-for enlightenment and those answers imperfectly understood because they are answers to unasked questions, there is a considered curriculum of learning to direct and contain the thoughts of the learner, to focus his attention and to provoke him to distinguish and to discriminate. 'School' is the recognition that the first and most important step in education is to become aware that 'learning' is not a 'seamless robe', that possibilities are not limitless.

Secondly, it is an engagement to learn by study. This is a difficult undertaking; it calls for effort. Whereas playful occupations are broken off whenever they cease to provide immediate satisfactions, learning, here, is a task to be persevered with and what is learned has to be both understood and remembered. It is in this perseverance, this discipline of inclination, that the indispensable habits of attention, concentration, patience, exactness, courage and intellectual honesty are acquired, and the learner comes to recognize that difficulties are to be surmounted, not evaded. For example, in a profuse and complicated civilization such as our own, the inheritance of human understandings, modes of thinking, feeling and imagination, is to be encountered, for the most part, in books or in human utterances. But learning to read or to listen is a slow and exacting engagement, little or nothing to do with acquiring information. It is learning to follow, to understand and to re-think deliberate expressions of rational consciousness; it is learning to recognize fine shades of meaning without overbalancing into the lunacy of 'decoding'; it is allowing another's thoughts to re-enact themselves in one's own mind; it is learning in acts of constantly surprised attention to submit to, to understand and to respond to what (in this response) becomes a part of our understanding of ourselves; and one may learn to read only by reading with care, and only from writings which stand well off from our immediate concerns: it is almost impossible to *learn* to read from contemporary writing.

The third component of the idea 'School' is that of detachment from the immediate, local world of the learner, its current concerns and the directions it gives to his attention, for this (and not 'leisure' or 'play') is the proper meaning of the word *scholē*. 'School' is a place apart in which the heir may encounter his moral and intellectual inheritance, not in the terms in which it is being used in the current engagements and occupations of the world outside (where much of it is forgotten, neglected, obscured, vulgarized or abridged, and

where it appears only in scraps and as investments in immediate enterprises) but as an estate, entire, unqualified and unencumbered. 'School' is an emancipation achieved in a continuous redirection of attention. Here, the learner is animated, not by the inclinations he brings with him, but by intimations of excellences and aspirations— he has never yet dreamed of; here he may encounter, not answers to the 'loaded' questions of 'life', but questions which have never before occurred to him; here he may acquire new 'interests' and pursue them uncorrupted by the need for immediate results; here he may learn to seek satisfactions he had never yet imagined or wished for.

For example, an important part of this inheritance is composed of languages, and in particular of what is to be the native language of the newcomer. This he has already learned to speak in its contemporary idioms and as a means of communicating with others of his kind. But at 'School' he *learns something more which is also something different*. There, studying a language is recognizing words as investments in thought and is learning to think more exactly; it is exploring its resources as themselves articulations of understandings. For to know a language merely as a means of contemporary communication is to be like a man who has inherited a palace overflowing with expressions, intimations and echoes of human emotions, perceptions, aspirations and understandings, and furnished with images and emanations of human reflection, but in whose barbaric recognition his inheritance is merely that of 'a roof over his head'. In short, 'School' is 'monastic' in respect of being a place apart where excellences may be heard because the din of worldly laxities and partialities is silenced or abated.

Further, the idea 'School' is that of a personal transaction between a 'teacher' and a 'learner'. The only indispensable equipment of 'School' is teachers: the current emphasis on apparatus of all sorts (not merely 'teaching' apparatus) is almost wholly destructive of 'School'. A teacher is one in whom some part or aspect or passage of this inheritance is alive. He has something of which he is a master to impart (an ignorant teacher is a contradiction) and he has deliberated its worth and the manner in which he is to impart it to a learner whom he knows. He is himself the custodian of that 'practice' in which an inheritance of human understanding survives and is perpetually renewed in being imparted to newcomers. To teach is to bring it about that, somehow, something of worth intended by a teacher is learned, understood and remembered by a learner. Thus, teaching is a variegated activity which may include hinting, suggesting, urging, coaxing, encouraging, guiding, pointing out, conversing, instructing, informing, narrating, lecturing, demonstrating,



exercising, testing, examining, criticizing, correcting, tutoring, drilling and so on—everything, indeed, which does not belie the engagement to impart an understanding. And learning may be looking, listening, overhearing, reading, receiving suggestions, submitting to guidance, committing to memory, asking questions, discussing, experimenting, practising, taking notes, recording, re-expressing and so on—anything which does not belie the engagement to think and to understand.

Finally, the idea 'School' is that of an historic community of teachers and learners, neither large nor small, with traditions of its own, evoking loyalties, pieties and affections, devoted to initiating successive generations of newcomers to the human scene into the *grandeurs* and servitudes of being human; an Alma Mater who remembers with pride or indulgence and is remembered with gratitude. The marks of a good school are that in it learning may be recognized as, itself, a golden satisfaction which needs no adventitious gilding to recommend it; and that it bestows upon its alumni the gift of a childhood recollected, not as a passage of time hurried through on the way to more profitable engagements, but, with gratitude, as an enjoyed initiation into the mysteries of a human condition: the gift of self-knowledge and of a satisfying intellectual and moral identity.

Thus, this transaction between the generations cannot be said to have any extrinsic 'end' or 'purpose': for the teacher it is part of his engagement of being human; for the learner it is the engagement of becoming human. It does not equip the newcomer to do anything specific; it gives him no particular skill, it promises no material advantage over other men, and it points to no finally perfect human character. Each, in participating in this transaction, takes in keeping some small or large part of an inheritance of human understandings. This is the mirror before which he enacts his own version of a human life, emancipated from the modishness of merely current opinions and released from having to seek an exiguous identity in a fugitive fancy, a duffle-coat, a C.N.D. badge or an 'ideology'. Education is not learning to do *this* or *that* more proficiently; it is acquiring in some measure an understanding of a human condition in which the 'fact of life' is continuously illuminated by a 'quality of life'. It is learning how to be at once an autonomous and a civilized subscriber to a human life.

Now, this is not a merely fanciful or visionary characterization of education. Of course, in the long history of the apprenticeship of newcomers to an adult human life other ideas than this of education have often intruded. Peoples with less complex inheritances of

beliefs and understandings have had appropriately simpler notions of this transaction between the generations, and, of course, there are and have been better and worse schools, and better and worse periods in the history of any school. But what I have been describing is what the ancient Athenians understood as *paideia*; and, sometimes more narrowly and sometimes more generously, it was what was passed on (with appropriate changes) from the schools of the Roman Empire to the cathedral, the collegiate, gild and grammar schools of medieval Christendom. Moved by a vivid consciousness of an intellectual and moral inheritance of great splendour and worth, this was the notion of education which informed the schools of renaissance Europe and which survived in our own grammar and public schools and their equivalents in continental Europe.

In later times, however, this understanding and practice of education has been invaded from two somewhat different directions. In both cases the forces of invasion have been gathering themselves over a period of some centuries, and both have been rewarded with considerable temporary success. Their common enterprise is to substitute for education some other and almost totally different idea of apprenticeship to adult life, and for 'School' some other and almost totally different practice of initiation.

The first of these invasions is to be recognized as an assault upon education directed against the idea 'School'. It is designed to abolish 'School', first by corrupting it and then by suppressing it.

The engagement to educate is a transaction between the generations in which newcomers may enjoy what they can acquire only in a procedure of learning; namely, an historic inheritance of human understandings and imaginings. The idea 'School' is that of a place apart where a prepared newcomer may encounter this inheritance unqualified by the partialities, the neglects, the abridgments and the corruptions it suffers in current use; of an engagement to learn, not by chance, but by study in conditions of direction and restraint designed to provoke habits of attention, concentration, exactness, courage, patience and discrimination and the recognition of excellence in thought and conduct; and of an apprenticeship to adult life in which he may learn to recognize and identify himself in terms other than those of his immediate circumstances.

The doctrine we are now to consider is that for all this there should be substituted an arena of childish self-indulgence from which all that might contain impulse and inclination and turn them into deliberate and knowledgeable choice has been purposely removed: a place where a child may be as rude as his impulses prompt and as busy or as idle as his inclinations suggest. There is to be no curriculum

of study, no orderly progression in learning. Impulse is to be let loose upon an undifferentiated confusion called, alternatively, 'the seamless robe of learning' or 'life in all its manifestations'. What may be learned is totally unforeseen and a matter of complete indifference.

Each child is expected to engage in such individual projects of so-called 'experimental' activity as he feels inclined, to pursue them in his own way and for so long as his inclination to do so lasts. Learning is to be a personal 'finding out' and consequently it becomes the incidental, exiguous and imperfectly understood by-product of 'discovery'. To 'discover' nothing is to be preferred to being told anything. The child is to be shielded from the humiliation (as it is thought) of his own ignorance and of intellectual surprise, and sheltered in the unfrustrating womb of his own inclinations. Teaching is to be confined to hesitant (preferably wordless) suggestion; mechanical devices are to be preferred to teachers, who are recognized not as custodians of a deliberate procedure of initiation but as mute presences, as interior decorators who arrange the furnishings of an environment and as mechanics to attend to the audio-visual apparatus.

'Discoveries' may become the subjects of 'free' group discussions; or they may be written about in compositions to be esteemed, not on account of their intelligibility, but for their 'freedom' of expression. It does not matter how they are written so long as they are 'creative': to stutter independently is a superior accomplishment to that of acquiring the self-discipline of a mother tongue. Fancy will have no encouragement to flower into imagination, or impulsive expression to acquire the intellectual virtue of grace, let alone exactness. Seeing and doing are preferred to thinking and understanding: pictorial representation is preferred to speech or writing. Remembering, the nursing mother of learning, is despised as a relic of servility. Standards of understanding and conduct are not merely ignored; they are taboo. The so-called 'inner discipline' of impulse, coupled with persuasion and physical intervention, takes the place of rules of conduct. In short, 'School' is to be corrupted by having imposed upon it the characteristics of a very indifferent kindergarten: 'Secondary schools', it is announced, 'will follow the lead already taken by primary schools'.

Now, it may be doubted whether anything exactly like this exists, even in America. What we have to consider is not a current practice, but a doctrine now loudly preached by persons in positions of authority.

Many of the writers who believe this condition of things to be both desirable and unavoidable are of no account. They affect to believe

that 'School' as a deliberate initiation of a learner into an inheritance of human understandings and proprieties of conduct is, and must be, children condemned to a prison-like existence in cell-like classrooms, compelled by threats to follow a sordid, senseless and rigid routine which destroys all individuality, dragooned into learning what they do not and cannot understand because it is remote from their 'interests' and from what they have hitherto encountered, the victims of a conspiracy against 'life' who acquiesce in their degraded condition only because to revolt would be to forfeit the subsequent opportunity of profitable employment. A voluble revulsion from this delusion, eked out by rubbish about the 'pursuit of truth' and what purports to be a superior understanding of the current generation of children, is all that these writers have to sustain their pretence of having thought about education.

There are, however, others who have (or who are reputed to have) more substantial reasons for promoting this abolition of 'School'. There are, for example, those for whom *any* inheritance of human understandings, so far from being something to be esteemed and which should evoke gratitude and make a boy glad to be alive and eager to become human, is an insufferable burden. 'I say to myself,' writes one such would-be exile from the human condition, 'what happiness it would be to throw myself into the river Lethe, to erase completely from my soul the memory of all knowledge, all art, all poetry; what happiness it would be to reach the opposite shore, naked, like the first man.'

It seems appropriate that such a person should see in education and in 'School' (however well managed) nothing but a frustrating intrusion upon blessed innocence, proper only to be abolished and replaced by the 'experimental' activity of unguided explorers with virgin intelligences. But this is an illusion. This aspiration, so elaborately expressed in terms of a recollected human mythology, is itself an historic human sentiment. What is being celebrated here is not a wish to be released from an inheritance of human understandings, but a sentiment which is one of the most moving and most delicate components of our inheritance of human understandings: that tender nostalgia at the heart of all European poetry, that image of impossible release, which we encounter only in being educated. What is being expressed is an understanding of the human condition which could never itself be a reason for abolishing education.

A more modish defence of this enterprise to abolish 'School' springs, not from the belief that *any* inheritance of human understanding must be frustrating, but from the persuasion that what is alleged to be the only significant inheritance we have (namely, that which is called 'scientific knowledge') is both so recent and in

process of such rapid transformation that 'to cram children with this formal body of knowledge which will quickly become antique' is clearly a lost endeavour. Where there is no 'relevant' inheritance of human understandings, where yesterday's frontier of knowledge is tomorrow's rubbish-dump of ideas, when we are in the middle of a technological revolution where skills and standards of conduct are evanescent, there is no room for learning which is not 'creative enquiry' or for 'education' which is not an engagement to solve a technological problem. 'School', no doubt, was appropriate enough for those obliged to seek understanding from their ancestors, but now both education and 'School' are anachronisms: there is nothing to learn.

But this enterprise of abolishing 'School' is not a new adventure, and these aspirations and announcements do less than justice to its antiquity and to the beliefs in terms of which it is defended. The current notion that 'School' and education should be replaced by an apprenticeship to adult life in which the newcomer is engaged in an activity of 'discovery' and 'finding out' for himself is the somewhat tattered relic of the error that the only inheritance which one generation has to transmit to the next is an inheritance of information about 'things' conveyed in words, and that it is, on this account, to be mistrusted.

Knowledge, so the doctrine ran, derives solely from the experience and observation of 'things'; and it represents 'the empire of man over things'. And where it is knowledge about ourselves, it is not a moral understanding of the 'dignity' of man, but knowledge of psycho-physical processes. This knowledge is recorded in words, and in words it is passed on. No great damage would be done if these words were always accurate reports about 'things', but for the most part this is not the case; words are distorting images of 'things' and they corrupt the information they purport to convey. 'Words obstruct understanding.' If, then, we are in earnest about knowledge, it is 'solid things', and not words, which should be 'the objects of our attention'. 'The first distemper of learning is when men study words and not things.' If we are concerned to educate, we must not try to convey our observations to others in words, for 'knowledge ought to be delivered and insinuated by the same method whereby it was achieved', namely, by an enquirer engaging for himself in the observation of 'things' and making his own discoveries. Moreover, this is not only the proper way of learning, it also holds out the promise of genuine discovery; for important 'discoveries' are often made accidentally by people of no great intelligence: they may come to a child following an impulse to 'find out'.

Now, I have been quoting from the writings of Francis Bacon,

who may be recognized as the father of this project to abolish 'School'. Indeed, it is not without interest that he did his best to prevent the foundation of what became a famous school, The Charterhouse, on the ground that it would concern itself, like other grammar schools, with the misconceived engagement of initiating new generations of boys into an inheritance of human understandings. There is, of course, much in Bacon's writings besides this doctrine, and something to modify it; but at that now distant date there was set on foot, not merely a suggestion which might be recognized as a valuable addition to our methods of educating the very young (e.g. 'encourage children to look and to touch'), but this misunderstanding of the educational engagement itself, with its often quoted slogan 'Things, not words',<sup>2</sup> with its taciturn teacher, its erroneous belief that 'language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known', its total neglect of literature, its absence of curriculum, its accent on crude information, its elevation of inclination, its pragmatic aspirations and with its conviction that a man's identity is to be found, not in his relation to an inheritance of human understandings, sentiments and beliefs, but in relation to a world of 'solid things'—all of which I have identified as the first of the current projects for the abolition of 'School' and the destruction of education.

In the doctrine of Bacon and his near contemporaries, Comenius, Hartlib, Milton *et al.*, 'education' stood, not for a transaction between the generations of human beings in which the newcomer was initiated into an inheritance of human understandings, sentiments, imaginings, etc., but for a release from all this in which he acquired 'objective' knowledge of the workings of a 'natural' world of uncontaminated 'things' and 'laws' and of himself as a feature of this world. This doctrine was early embalmed in a set of clichés, the repetition of which over the succeeding centuries constituted one of the 'progressive' strains in modern educational theory. It made no immediate impact upon the educational engagement of European peoples, but it emerged later as the rationale of a design to abolish education.

But the current invaders of the educational engagement do not stop at this project to corrupt schools by depriving them of their character as 'School'; they design and foresee their suppression.

The more hesitant of these reformers imagine the dissolution of schools in terms of a dissolution of the distinction between 'School' and the world outside. Their moderate vision embraces merely the abolition of the child and of 'School' as a place apart. What is to take place is a 'community centre', a combination of a local

parliament, a people's court, a village hall, an information centre, a clinic, a social guidance organization, a sports club, an amusement park, a polytechnic and a 'cultural centre'. Hither, children and adults will repair when they feel inclined to do so. There they may together exercise their inclinations and their impulsive energies which, in the case of children, will have 'burst out of the classroom box'. There, emancipated from the alleged superstition that knowledge is diverse, and at the age of twelve or thereabouts, they will become equal participants in the local world of adult activities and win their 'education' from the open book of life. In this community centre the child-adult will find, not teachers, but 'trained social workers'; he will find a 'structured environment' which will provide endless opportunity for 'self-expression' and for making unforeseen 'discoveries'; and rooms equipped with 'technological devices', programmed teaching machines and apparatus to relay pictures and talks, broadcast from a central School of the Air. There, a stranger to duties, relieved from frustration, allegedly emancipated from the 'intrusion of adult interference', he will enjoy a self-determined 'education', limited only by the decreed exclusion of any alternative. For, of course, this suppression of 'School' will come about only in a dissolution of schools comparable to the dissolution of monasteries in sixteenth-century Europe; it will be the work of 'enlightened' governments.

Others have seen beyond this still homely vision of an amusement arcade and playground for all ages. Inspired by the promise held out by recent mechanical invention, they foresee a future in which each home will become 'the basic learning unit'. It will contain 'an electronic console connected with a central computer system, a videotape and a microfilm library regulated by a computer, and with a national television network'. All 'education' will be dispensed from a 'central educational hub'. No longer will children have to 'go to school', or have 'to jostle their way into class'. Each child, at the touch of a button, will have access to a 'learning package' programmed for individual use. He will 'type on a surface resembling a television screen in response to recorded instructions regulated by a computer'; and, 'at the touch of a button, "teachers" may call up profiles of his progress and advise accordingly'. He will be able 'to choose his own educational goals' and pursue them at his own pace.

But the residual recognition of education which survives in these proposals or forecasts is absent from the plans of the most intrepid of our 'educational' projectors, who look forward to a final dissolution of both 'School' and schools. They design not merely the abolition of the child but the abolition of man. The child who asks himself

'What shall I learn and where is the machine to teach me?' is to be replaced by the social engineer concerned with the question 'What sort of a "human being" do we want and how may he be most easily manufactured?' 'The possibilities,' writes one of these visionaries, 'virtually defy our imagination.' Here, in spite of the claim to be concerned with education, any pretence of teaching, learning or understanding has been abandoned. Desirable children will be the outcome of controlled genetic selection, and their 'behaviour' will be determined by brains stimulated by electrical currents and by the injection of extracts from other more distinguished brains, by inoculation with chemicals and by other irresistible processes of conditioning. With the emergence of this race of zombies, who behave impeccably, who are strangers to neuroses, plagued by no frustrations, unworried about their own identities (because they need none), but who can neither understand nor act, 'Man's best dreams,' says this same professor of education, 'seem almost within our grasp.'

To corrupt 'School' by depriving it of its character as a serious engagement to learn by study, and to abolish it either by assimilating it to the activities, 'interests', partialities and abridgments of a local world, or by substituting in its place a factory for turning out zombies, are, then, two sides of the current project to destroy education. It is an enterprise for abolishing man, first by dis-inheriting him, and secondly by annihilating him. That some of the persons engaged in this enterprise should represent their doctrine as an improved understanding of the educational engagement, and that they should claim to be the friends and emancipators of children, is not unexpected; but the representation is false and the claim fraudulent.

But, although this enterprise and the doctrines which support it are the most carefully contrived of the current projects to abolish the educational engagement, they do not exhaust the current threat to education. I will conclude with a brief consideration of another enterprise which has increasingly hindered this engagement and now threatens to obliterate it.

The engagement to educate may be frustrated by the conviction that there is no inheritance of human understandings and beliefs into which to initiate a newcomer; or by the belief that there is such an inheritance, but that, since it is necessarily worthless, the apprenticeship of each new generation to adult life should be a ceremonial rejection of what it would be corrupting even to inspect, followed by 'a disturbed and disturbing argument of a creative kind' in which each generation originates its own understandings,



governed (one must suppose) by a self-denying ordinance not to inhibit 'progress' by divulging it to the next.

It may, however, also be hindered (and, indeed, in an important respect, utterly frustrated) by the belief that, although there may be a considerable inheritance of human understandings, sentiments, beliefs, etc., in terms of which a newcomer might be released from the grip of his immediate world and come to understand and identify himself as a civilized human being aware of standards of excellence in thought and conduct little or not at all reflected in the current enterprises and activities of that world, this identity is both distracting and 'socially dangerous'. It distracts from the ordinary business of life and, since it is an identity not equally attainable by all, it is more apt to be socially 'divisive' than integrative. Hence, the apprenticeship of the newcomer to adult life should be an initiation, not into the *grandeurs* of human understanding, but into the skills, activities and enterprises which constitute the local world into which he is presently and actually born. The postulant to adult life is bidden to seek himself and to learn to enact himself in terms of an assigned or a self-chosen role in an association of *fonctionnaires*.

This I will call the substitution of 'socialization' for education. It is to be recognized as a frustration of the educational engagement and a destruction of 'School' because it attributes to the teaching and learning which comprise this apprenticeship an extrinsic 'end' or 'purpose'; namely, the integration of the newcomer into a current 'society' recognized as the manifold of skills, activities, enterprises, understandings, sentiments and beliefs required to keep it going; in short, 'to rear the most "current" men possible, "current" in the sense in which the word is used of coins of the realm'.<sup>3</sup> It may be recognized as a different frustration of the educational engagement from those which I have already noticed; although, of course, there may be contingent connexions between them.

The belief that what I have called 'socialization' should be substituted for education is to be distinguished, first, from the belief that we live in societies which, because they are associations of human beings, depend upon their members being human, that is, being in some degree educated persons. For, to believe this is not to attribute an extrinsic 'purpose' to the engagement in which these persons acquire a human character; 'being human', here, is recognized, not as a means to an end (i.e. living with other human beings), but as a condition for which it is meaningless to ask for a justification in respect of human beings. What else should they be? Second, it must be distinguished from the recognition that the qualities of educated persons may often be valuable in the performance of 'social' functions. For, while an educational engagement is not

*Education: The engagement and its frustration*

designed to *produce* performers of 'social' functions (this is what is meant by saying it has no extrinsic 'purpose'), neither is it designed to *produce* 'socially' valueless persons.

The enterprise we are concerned with now may be most accurately described as that of substituting 'social' for educational consideration in the apprenticeship of newcomers to adult life. Of course, this substitution of one set of considerations for another is hostile to the educational engagement and to the idea 'School', not because it necessarily excludes everything which might have an educational value, but because whatever is allowed properly to belong to this apprenticeship is admitted solely in respect of its alleged 'social' value and is recognized solely in relation to an alleged 'social' purpose. 'Service of the community' is an expression susceptible of a variety of interpretations in relation to 'education'—it may favour rare ability or commonplace equality—but wherever preparation for it is substituted for education 'socialization' has taken the place of the educational engagement.

The current project of substituting 'socialization' for education and instruments of 'socialization' for schools emerged, so far as Europe is concerned, from a somewhat different enterprise promoted or undertaken, for the most part, by the rulers of modern European States beginning in the late seventeenth century. What I refer to here is not the activities of these rulers (both Catholic and Protestant) in respect of the educational engagement itself when, beginning in the sixteenth century, they gradually usurped the *auctoritas docendi* of the medieval church. These activities were often extensive and were, of course, designed to promote the integration of those over whom they ruled. They included the imposition of confessional qualifications upon both teachers and learners in schools and universities, but they did not otherwise seriously modify the educational engagement. They were, for the most part, the exercise of the ecclesiastical authority which had fallen to civil sovereigns, and the many schools and universities founded at this time under royal or ducal charters or by private benefactors were institutions similar to those which already existed. They were novel only in reflecting the changes in the educational engagement which sprang from the 'new learning', changes concerned with the new appreciation (as soon as the fifteenth century) of the significant inheritance of human understandings to be passed on. Furthermore, in later times governments have acquired extensive control over the education of their subjects, over the curriculum of schools and the appointment of teachers, but without imposing considerations hostile to the educational engagement and to the idea 'School'. What I am concerned with now is not

any of this, but a project which lies to one side of it; namely, the provision of an *alternative* to education.

In many of the States of Germany (notably Prussia), in France, in the Empire and elsewhere, what was set on foot in the early eighteenth century was not any attempt to change the character of existing schools and universities, nor to modify the educational engagement; it was the project of providing some alternative apprenticeship to adult life for those who, mainly by reason of their poverty, enjoyed little or nothing of the kind. These, the *canaille*, as the 'enlightened' rulers of continental Europe so gracefully called them, were coming to be regarded as a liability. Stuck fast in traditional ways, outflanked by economic and technological change, unable to provide successfully for themselves, they were convicted of making an inadequate contribution to the productive enterprise of the societies into which they were born. The project was to equip their children with some humble but more modern skills by virtue of which they might become an asset rather than a liability to 'the nation'. They were to be taught to read, to write, to figure, to measure, to 'take directions', to read and to draw diagrams, to understand transactions in money, and religious instruction was usually added to this curriculum. Thus furnished, it was thought that they would be able to make a larger contribution to the well-being of 'the nation' and begin to recognize themselves more clearly as intelligent components of its natural resources, its 'human capital'. It was even recognized that a totally ignorant soldier was something of a liability, and the standing armies of the Continent at that time were large. Moreover, this undertaking to 'integrate' the poor into 'the community' by equipping them to be more useful members of it was seen to promise a national system of so-called 'education', an *éducation publique* or an *éducation nationale*, itself the emblem of the emergent doctrine that rulers have a right to instruct their subjects and that subjects (particularly the poor) have a duty to contribute to the well-being of 'the nation'.<sup>4</sup> In England there was a similar recognition of the waste of resources entailed in the ignorance of the poor, but this sort of instruction had been unevenly provided since the late seventeenth century in parish and charity schools and in schools set up or taken over by such organizations as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and later the National Society. It was not until later that the Government began to play some part in it, and even then the continental doctrine that children (especially poor children) belong to 'the State' was slow to take root.

Thus, parallel to the collegiate and grammar schools of England and to their equivalents on the Continent, there emerged an apprenticeship to adult life distinguished both by its brevity and

because it was governed by 'social', not educational, considerations. It was geared to satisfying what were already thought of as 'the needs of the nation', and the well-being of 'the nation' was recognized to require that this instruction of the children of the poor should be appropriate to their future occupations. The institutions in which this instruction was dispensed were, everywhere, a mixture of new and old and reflected local inheritances. This alternative to education emerged from the surviving village schools of medieval Christendom which had depended upon the uncertainties of local charity and the energy of the parish priest, and, no doubt, it long remained subject to these hazards. But it emerged clearly when, usually under the direction of a ruler, these were diminished, when attendance was made compulsory and when its extrinsic purpose was more exactly understood and formulated.

This alternative to education, designed originally for the poor and as an undertaking of 'socialization', was, of course, sensitive to 'social' changes, and with the emergence of industrial occupations it was considerably extended. In England, for example, in the early nineteenth century, besides the parish and charity schools, there appeared private schools and 'academies' established to provide, not for the poor, but for the numerous postulants for the clerkly and other occupations of an industrial and commercial society; and since that time there has gradually emerged, in every European country, as an alternative to education, a systematic apprenticeship to domestic, industrial and commercial life in a 'modern' State.

It has been continuously thought about, rearranged, redesigned and improved. It has been enlarged in response to new 'needs'; the period of time it covers has been extended and the qualifications it confers have become more precise and require to be earned in more exacting achievements. But its general character has remained unchanged. There is now, in most European countries, a primary stage in which literacy and numeracy are learned and practised; a second stage in which these accomplishments are extended and some general knowledge (particularly what is called 'scientific' knowledge) is acquired; and a third stage in which some specialized skill or technique is learned in an apprenticeship, a Trade School, a Technical College, a Polytechnic or a private establishment where attendance may be full-time or in the intervals of employment. It has come now to embrace nearly all the skills, techniques, crafts, trades and occupations in which the 'needs of the nation' are satisfied. During the last fifty years or so the whole of it (and not merely the earlier stages) has fallen more and more under the direction and control of governments; and in so far as this has been the case it has become susceptible to the sort of calculation entailed in a 'manpower

budget' where 'the nation' is understood as a collection of interlocking skills and occupations each with its optimum establishment. Since it has long ago ceased to be merely the equipment of the neglected poor to make a greater and more various contribution to the well-being of 'the nation', other reasons have had to be found in terms of which to defend and to make intelligible this alternative to education, especially its second stage. For the most part these have drawn upon the beliefs that the 'needs of the nation' can be satisfied in no other way and that there are children for whom the ardours of education would be an unprofitable engagement; but in some quarters these have been supplemented by the assertion that this is itself education and not an alternative to it.

This apprenticeship to domestic, industrial and commercial life was, in its beginning, independent of the educational engagement being pursued in schools and universities. There were, of course, connexions between them. Many of the entrants to grammar schools (and, before the invention of 'preparatory' schools, to collegiate schools) came from 'petty' and parish schools, and both in Germany and in France the *Gymnasien* and the *lycées* drew their pupils from the *Gemeinden* and the *communaux* schools. Those who supplied what were distinguished as the 'professional' needs of 'the nation' (lawyers, doctors, etc.), as well as many who engaged in industry or commerce, were persons who qualified for their profession or who learned their trade after having been to 'school' and perhaps university. But little of this was reflected in the educational engagement itself: the appearance of an 'Army class' or a 'mathematical side' was an insignificant modification.

Moreover, in spite of its 'social' design, the alternative to education was never totally devoid of educational features. In its beginning, when it was concerned with children up to the age of about eleven, perhaps the only significant element of culture it contained, the only suggestion it made to those who enjoyed it that they might recognize themselves as something more and other than potential units in what was coming to be thought of as a 'productive system', was the religious instruction, frowned upon in France, but elsewhere part of the curriculum. This catechetical teaching cannot have been very inspiring, but it at least intimated an identity and a 'quality of life' beyond the 'fact of life'; in biblical stories something like an inheritance of human understandings was at least dimly to be discerned; and for many the Bible was the only 'literature' they were acquainted with. Long ago this 'primary' stage became the main field of educational experiment which has had the ambiguous outcome of making it, in most European countries, both more and

less appropriate as a preparation for 'School'. Similarly, when the period of time covered by the second stage of this apprenticeship to adult life was somewhat extended,<sup>5</sup> its 'socially' designed curriculum acquired some features which, although they might be there for 'social' reasons, held some promise of being educational; for example, a glimpse of the current myth of the history of the nation.

Our concern, however, is not with whatever tenuous educational features there may have been in this historic alternative to education (the second stage of which, so far as England is concerned, was re-examined by the Hadow Committee in 1926<sup>6</sup>) but with the invasion which the educational engagement as it has existed in the schools and universities of Europe has suffered from this alternative. For, after a brief but not wholly ineffective attempt to extend the opportunity of education to more of those who had not hitherto enjoyed it, this has become the most notable feature of the recent history of European 'education': the enterprise of *substituting* 'socialization' for education.<sup>7</sup>

By 'socialization' (let me repeat) I mean here an apprenticeship to adult life—teaching, training, instructing, imparting knowledge, learning, etc.—governed by an extrinsic purpose. The most common version of this alternative to education has been that which emerged from the efforts of rulers and others to equip the poor to make a more effective contribution to the well-being of 'the nation', and which has since been elaborated into more-or-less systematic arrangements for imparting to successive generations the knowledge and the skills required to sustain the enterprises and provide the satisfactions characteristic of a modern industrial and commercial society. Here the project of substituting 'socialization' for education is that of imposing upon the educational engagement the considerations which comprise this extrinsic purpose. The other notable version of a 'social' alternative to education is a more recent appearance and pulls in a different direction, namely, that of an apprenticeship to adult life governed by the 'social' consideration that it shall be the same for all children. The design here is to reduce or to abolish disparities of opportunity and thus to generate a 'fully integrated' society. Here, however, the design and its imposition upon the educational engagement are inseparable: the design itself requires that all schools shall be the same and that none shall be 'School'.

In pursuit of this enterprise of substitution the chief agents, of course, have been governments; and it has been pursued in legislative proposals of various dimensions and different degrees of directness. It is a concomitant of that 'enlightened' understanding of

government in which rulers are recognized as the managers of an association bent upon the achievement of some substantive 'purpose' or the enjoyment of substantial satisfactions and in which 'education' is regarded as merely a means to the chosen end. In one version of this enterprise, it is, with us, an old story. In 1821 a Bill was promoted in Parliament designed to require the collegiate and grammar schools of England (with the exceptions of Eton and Westminster) to provide the sort of elementary and vocationally directed training which was being provided in the parish and charity schools and in private 'academies' and institutions of all sorts set up for the purpose. There are examples of grammar schools at that time departing from the terms of their foundation in order to engage in this activity. The other and more recent version of this enterprise, the project of replacing education with an apprenticeship to adult life governed by the consideration of 'social integration', may be illustrated in the proposals of one of its promoters. 'It is time,' he writes, 'to ask more rigorously whether the present curricular differences between schools are socially divisive', and he suggests that what he calls 'the linguistic discipline' of Latin is divisive and should *on that account* be abolished. When he goes on to speculate on the 'common culture' to be disseminated in this alternative to education, his project is unmistakably the abolition of 'School': it is to be based upon 'flexible, exact and sensitive speech, creative writing, a cultivation of the living arts, an appreciation of the mass media and a concern for world affairs'.

I do not propose to follow the history or to forecast the fortunes of this design to replace education by 'socialization'. In most parts of Europe it has been a plodding engagement, enlivened by some dramatic moments and directed by the characteristic imbecility of political fanaticism. It was a project long before it became a policy; and in it those who might have devoted themselves to making the opportunity of education available to more of those who had hitherto enjoyed only an alternative to it, have devoted themselves, instead, to its abolition. Where governments already controlled whatever there was of a genuine educational engagement, as well as the current alternative to it, the task of assimilating the one to the other has not been difficult. The outcome (as in Russia) has been a single 'system' of apprenticeship to adult life which, while it may allow considerable internal diversity, is wholly subordinate to 'social' considerations. In England, a considerable part of the educational engagement (including all the universities) has sold itself over the last fifty years to what it supposed was a benign government genuinely concerned for its survival in difficult circumstances, only to discover that it had sold itself into 'sociali-

zation' and abetted its own destruction. What remains are impoverished fragments which have to endure the threat of dissolution. Modern governments are not interested in education; they are concerned only to impose 'socialization' of one kind or another upon the surviving fragments of a once considerable educational engagement.

This situation, however, is not solely the outcome of a legislative policy bent upon denying to any what (it is supposed) some do not want or can make no use of. It would never have acquired its present dimensions had it not been promoted by contingent circumstances and abetted by intellectual confusion. The enterprise of abolishing education by substituting some version of 'socialization' has found an ally in some features of those other, concurrent, projects for the destruction of 'School' which I have already noticed; it has been promoted, often inadvertently, by innovations in the educational engagement; it has been obscured by the noisiest of the controversies of the last fifty years (that concerned with the measurement and distribution of so-called 'intelligence'); and it has been confirmed in a corrupt way of thinking about the educational engagement itself. Something must be said about each of these self-betrays of the engagement.

The alternative to education, invented for the poor as something instead of virtually nothing, was designed (for the most part by politicians) as an apprenticeship to adult life which, far from offering a release from the immediacies, the partialities and the abridgments of the local and contemporary world of the learner, reproduced this world in its already familiar terms and provided the learner with more information about what was already within his reach and with skills in which he was reckoned to be 'interested' because he was already aware of them in use or in his own talents. The engagement was not to initiate him into a difficult and unfamiliar inheritance of human understandings and sentiments, but to give him a somewhat firmer grasp of what he recognized to be 'relevant' to himself as he was and to the 'facts of life'. He was not to be put in the way of understanding himself in a new context or of undergoing a palinogenesis in which he acquired a more ample identity; he was merely to be provoked to see himself more clearly in the mirror of his current world. Those who promoted this alternative to education believed that its products would be 'more useful members of society'. They no more confused this apprenticeship to adult life with the educational engagement than they confused the parish with the grammar school, the *école communale* with the *lycée*, the 'public' school with the Boston Latin School, the *Realschule* with the *Gymnasium*, the 'secondary school' (in the Hadow sense) with the



grammar or collegiate school, or the technical college with the university.

Nevertheless, the design of this alternative to education is both conceptually and historically connected with what purported to be a better understanding of the educational engagement itself. It was allied with the Baconian notion of 'education' as a concern with 'things, not words', as 'learning from life' and the discovery of 'how it works'; with the absence of a curriculum (each day may be relied upon to provide 'experiences' to be looked into) which might disturb the learner by suggesting unfamiliar distinctions; with the reluctance to 'foist upon children problems which do not develop from their own interests' and with the desired and foreseen abolition of 'School' which comes from the dissolution of the difference between 'School' and the local world. In short, the political project of *substituting* 'socialization' for education has been sustained by beliefs about the educational engagement itself in which the alternative appeared, not as a valuable but admittedly inferior article, designed originally for the poor, but as an *educationally* superior article. Without this support (spurious though it is) this enterprise of substitution would, no doubt, have been more difficult.

These beliefs made little impact upon the educational engagement of Europe; they were hostile, not to the contingent vices of schools, but to the virtues embedded in the idea 'School'. The engagement (represented in the *Gymnasium*, the *Lyceé*, the grammar and collegiate schools and elsewhere) had educational traditions capable of resisting the enterprise of destroying it by assimilating it to the alternative. But in recent times there have been changes in curriculum and in methods of teaching which, sometimes inadvertently, have pushed the engagement in the direction of the alternative by allowing 'social' considerations in some measure to oust educational. The emergence of 'science' in the curriculum of schools and the study of languages are two examples out of many of this self-corruption of the educational engagement.

If 'science' had entered the educational engagement as an initiation into an intellectual adventure recognized as a component of an inheritance of human understanding and beliefs it would, no doubt, have constituted a benign and an appropriate addition to what was already there. But it did not. 'Science' belonged, instead and in the first place, to the alternative for education, designed to 'socialize', where it was recognized as useful information about the world related to some skill, craft or fabricating activity—what the Hadow Report was later to call 'practical science'; and when, thus understood, it was allowed to graduate to compose part of an educational engagement it was clearly eccentric to the engagement. Becoming

established in this naïve Baconian idiom as an alleged knowledge of 'things' not words, of objects not ideas, of observations not thoughts, as the Rousseauistic *leçon des choses* which still appears in the *Cycle* programme, it was confirmed in its eccentricity: its intellectual despicability could not be concealed.

Nevertheless, 'science' did find a place for itself in 'School'. It was, with some difficulty, detached from immediate vocational considerations; it remained for a long time 'useful information' about the natural world with which every educated man should be acquainted,<sup>8</sup> but in the course of time (within living memory) something has been done to give it recognition as one of the great intellectual pursuits of mankind: but without notable success. It is now taught and learned more seriously, but its place in current educational arrangements remains ambiguous: chemistry, for example, has never outgrown its character as a sophisticated kind of cookery, and 'science' is still defended in terms of 'social', not educational, considerations: 'We need first-class surgeons, engineers, chemists, psychologists, social scientists, etc.', and unless they are started on their way in school we shall not get what our hope of affluence requires for its fulfilment.

Flattered by circumstance and linked with ancient heresy, an attempt was made to promote 'science' itself as a 'culture' in which human beings identified themselves in relation to 'things' and to their 'empire over things',<sup>9</sup> but it now deceives nobody; boys do not elect for the 'science sixth' expecting to achieve self-knowledge, but for vocational reasons. Regrettably, this is not yet the case with the no less fraudulent claims of the so-called 'social sciences' which have been pushed into the curriculum of schools and universities, but the reckoning cannot be far off. For a generation now they have remained in business only on account of their technological pretensions.

The educational engagement in respect of languages is to initiate learners into a language as a source and a repository of human understandings and sentiments, and it was this which the collegiate and grammar schools of England and their equivalents elsewhere undertook in respect of Latin and Greek and, to a lesser extent, in respect of a native language. What the learner submitted himself to was not a 'linguistic discipline' but an initiation into exactitudes of thought and generousities of feeling, into literatures and into histories in which the 'fact of life' was illuminated by a 'quality of life'. When modern languages became part of our educational engagement (first, perhaps, in schools for girls) they were chosen for their literatures and they were designed to provoke the learner to identify himself in terms of a larger European culture: it was to read Lessing

and Goethe, Molière and Racine, Dante and Leopardi, Cervantes and Calderón.

The counterpart to this in the alternative for education was, however, a different kind of undertaking, dominated by the belief that 'language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known'. The languages taught were chosen in respect of 'social' (that is, commercial or local), not educational, considerations; and they were learnt merely as a means of communication. It was this extrinsic 'purpose' which made appropriate the methods of learning from which have emerged audio-visual language machines, 'language laboratories' and 'language laboratory assistants' instead of persons who had a profound knowledge of the languages, the literatures and the histories concerned. The alleged virtue of language machines is that 'they teach people to speak languages with confidence, and they do it fast', a virtue appropriate to the enterprise; and no harm would have been done if what was appropriate to the alternative to education, both in choice of languages and in methods of learning, had not been taken into the educational engagement and corrupted it. When it is said that a child should learn a foreign language as he learns his native language, 'by hearing it spoken', what is being overlooked is that in the educational engagement of 'School' what he learns of his native language is precisely what never could be learned by 'hearing it spoken'.

The self-corruption of universities exceeds that of any other part of the educational engagement of European peoples. In times past English universities have often been indolent guardians of the engagement to educate and as often they have recovered, but for a generation now they have anticipated almost every design of governments to transform them into instruments of 'socialization', hardly needing to be bribed to undertake this destruction of themselves. Nevertheless they have, of course, received a considerable push in this direction, not least in the Report of the Committee on Higher Education (1963), which assimilates them into a system of so-called 'higher education' understood as an investment in learners who have acquired certain qualifications, designed to equip them with the specially complicated skills and versatilities increasingly required if the nation is to satisfy 'the aims of economic growth' and 'to compete successfully with other highly developed countries in an era of rapid technological and social advance'. No doubt universities are intended by the Committee to have a place of their own in this 'higher education', but they are to submit to the extrinsic purpose, the 'social' considerations, which identify it as an alternative to education. In the event the disaster is not that they are being

swamped by persons in search of almost anything but education, but their almost total destruction as an educational engagement.

The design to substitute 'socialization' for education has gone far enough to be recognized as the most momentous occurrence of this century, the greatest of the adversities to have overtaken our culture, the beginning of a dark age devoted to barbaric affluence. It emerged from a project, embarked upon about three centuries ago (which was neither stupid nor itself menacing to the educational engagement) to provide an alternative to education for those who, for whatever reason, fell outside the educational engagement. Since those times this alternative has been adjusted to respond to changing circumstance; it has been improved and extended to compose an apprenticeship to adult domestic, industrial and commercial life, it has generated a variety of versions of itself, and for the most part it has submitted to the direction of governments. Indeed, it has become what the world it has helped to create can recognize as a 'service industry'. It was designed as a contribution to the well-being of 'the nation'; it has been welcomed or endured on account of the affluence it is alleged to be about to procure, and attempts have been made to calculate its product in terms of costs and benefits; and it has been defended on the ground of what it is designed to produce and upon the more questionable plea that it is the most appropriate apprenticeship for certain sorts of children. This makeshift for education, however, was permitted to corrupt the educational engagement of European peoples, and it is now proclaimed as its desirable successor. The usurpation has everywhere been set on foot.

But the victim of this enterprise is not merely an historic educational engagement (with all its faults and shortcomings); it is also the idea of education as an initiation into an inheritance of human understandings in virtue of which a man might be released from the 'fact of life' and recognize himself in terms of a 'quality of life'. The calamity of the enterprise is matched by the intellectual corruption of the enterprisers.

There were, in the past, naïve promoters of the most common version of this enterprise who believed it to be unfortunate that there should be schools not expressly designed to impart to learners information about the world they were about to enter and in fact often failing to impart this information in sufficient quantity because of their concern with an inheritance of human understandings; but they did not deny that such schools existed. Like Bacon they recognized Westminster College and probably recognized it to have some virtue, but they preferred Gresham College; and even Mr E. Robinson recognizes the existence of what he calls 'academic'

education, although he deplores it as a grossly imperfect apprenticeship to adult life when compared with the excitement offered by 'the new polytechnics'.

There are others who do not deny the difference but who mistake the distinction; while intending to defend the educational engagement against one version of 'socialization' they use arguments which merely identify it with another, and in this manner, inadvertently perhaps, banish education from the scene. For example, there are writers who are opposed to that version of 'socialization' in which the considerations which govern the apprenticeship to adult life are an overriding concern for 'social integration'. But the reason they give for their opposition is not that the project is destructive of the educational engagement, but only that its outcome will almost certainly be a lowering of the standards of achievement and a consequent failure to satisfy the need of society for a constant supply of first-class engineers, doctors, economists, teachers, mathematicians, chemists, technicians and so on. So far as anyone can foresee, their expectations are likely to be fulfilled; at all events, these writers are correct in recognizing what they oppose as a calculated indifference to scholastic achievement and an earnest desire to impose a *solidarité de la sottise*. But to oppose it on the grounds that it will hinder the appearance of 'a succession of adults who possess the advanced skills upon which our survival depends' is to have surrendered to the false doctrine that education is to be understood as an investment of the human resources of the nation in an attempt not to be out-distanced in affluence by America, Russia or Japan. In short, these writers recognize a difference between education and its alternatives, but mistake the distinction as one of the standards of achievement in the pursuit of an extrinsic 'purpose'.

But the determined promoters of the enterprise to destroy education are restrained by no such lingering recognition of an educational engagement. They represent themselves as persons who have perceived a 'truth' which prejudice has concealed from others; namely, that everything has a 'social function', that everything is what its 'social function' declares it to be, and that, consequently there never were and never could be educational as distinct from 'social' considerations in respect of the apprenticeship of newcomers to an adult human life. Thus, it is said that 'the function of the public school and university system [*sic*] has been to train a ruling *élite*', that 'the public school was developed to run an empire', that 'the ancient universities of Europe were founded to promote the training of the clergy, doctors and lawyers', that the function of a modern university is to impart 'skills which demand special training' and that most undergraduates know this to be the case and go there

to acquire such skills, and so on.<sup>10</sup> It is said, in short, that education has never been anything other than a 'social investment' related (often imperfectly) to 'the needs of a society in respect of instruction'. Consequently (they continue), intelligent reflection about education must be reflection about the appropriateness of a current educational engagement to the needs of a current society; and educational reform (when it is not concerned merely with methods of teaching and learning) is detecting what are the 'functions' which together constitute a current society and devising a 'system of education' which will produce most economically the most adequate performers of these functions. When these projectors settle upon 'economic development', 'the fight for economic survival' or 'keeping up in the economic race' as the engagement to be provided for, and represent themselves as the designers of an apprenticeship to adult life in which every boy and girl learns to identify himself as a (perhaps functionally distinguished) member of a development corporation, they have no difficulty in appearing as benign reformers, doing no more than releasing the educational engagement from antiquated 'social' considerations and bringing it up to date. The fact that their design for 'education' corresponds (with, of course, the appropriate enlargements) to the alternative for education devised in the seventeenth century for the poor is regarded as a tribute to the genius of the inventors of that alternative, who may be criticized only for not at once setting about the destruction of schools and universities which were, even then, providing performers for functions of declining significance. Thus, the destruction of an educational engagement proceeds behind a veil of conceptual nonsense and historical rubbish, now called 'the sociology of education', and designed to persuade us that what is being destroyed never existed.

Education, I have contended, is the transaction between the generations in which newcomers to the scene are initiated into the world which they are to inhabit. This is a world of understandings, imaginings, meanings, moral and religious beliefs, relationships, practices—states of mind in which the human condition is to be discerned as recognitions of and responses to the ordeal of consciousness. These states of mind can be entered into only by being themselves understood, and they can be understood only by learning to do so. To be initiated into this world is learning to become human; and to move within it freely is being human, which is an 'historic', not a 'natural' condition.

Thus, an educational engagement is at once a discipline and a release; and it is the one by virtue of being the other. It is a difficult

engagement of learning by study in a continuous and exacting redirection of attention and refinement of understanding which calls for humility, patience and courage. Its reward is an emancipation from the mere 'fact of living', from the immediate contingencies of place and time of birth, from the tyranny of the moment and from the servitude of a merely current condition; it is the reward of a human identity and of a character capable in some measure of the moral and intellectual adventure which constitutes a specifically human life.

Consequently, education is not to be confused with that accommodation to circumstances in which a newcomer learns the latest steps in the *danse macabre* of wants and satisfactions and thus acquires a 'current' value in the world. Some of these steps, the 'specially complicated skills and versatilities' of which the Report on Higher Education speaks, have become intricate, and to learn them is an exacting task. But nothing a man may learn in this respect has anything whatsoever to do with education.

It is now about two centuries since our educational engagement began to be corrupted by having imposed upon it the character of a school of dancing. This usurpation has been promoted by confused beliefs about the transaction itself, and it has been procured by 'enlightened' governments. It is now far advanced. Fragments of an educational engagement, however, remain: relatively uncorrupt schools, universities which have not entirely surrendered the character of educational institutions, and teachers who refuse to become dancing-masters. Moreover, with some at least, the urge to destroy 'School' by depriving it of its character of a serious engagement to learn by study may, perhaps, be interpreted as a misdirected attempt to escape the enormities of 'socialization': when to teach is identified with 'socialization', education becomes the engagement to teach nothing. Caught between these destructive winds of obliquely opposed doctrine our engagement to educate is torn asunder.

## Notes

- 1 'The student with an external vocational referent for his studies always has the possible justification for his most outrageous ideas—that they work.' E. Robinson, *The New Polytechnics*, Cornmarket, 1968.
- 2 This nearly meaningless expression, which runs through the history of modern so-called educational theory, has done more than anything else to corrupt our understanding of the educational engagement.
- 3 Nietzsche, *Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, I.
- 4 Hobbes had earlier suggested that this alternative for education should be devoted merely to teaching the duty of 'obedience' to the civil sovereign.

### *Education: The engagement and its frustration*

- 5 In England, even in the early nineteenth century, some of the schools of the National Society and other educational organizations provided for children up to the age of fourteen; and where this was so foreign languages and even some Latin were sometimes taught.
- 6 It will be remembered that the terms of reference of the Hadow Committee required it to consider what had come to be called 'secondary education', that is, a 'post-primary' alternative to education up to the age of fifteen. Every page of the Report (and not least its historical review) shows its concern with an apprenticeship to adult life which should be agreeable to those who were to enjoy it in reflecting the 'interests' they were imagined to bring with them and their local 'social and natural environment', should be appropriate to what were assumed to be their limited intellectual capacities, and should reveal the connexion between 'life and livelihood'. The Hadow Report was, perhaps, the last to be concerned expressly with an alternative to education.
- 7 Later enquiries promoted by governments (notably the Newsom Report and the Report on Higher Education, and many of the Working Papers of the Schools Council, e.g. nos 7 and 11), while sometimes purporting to be concerned with the educational engagement, have been chiefly concerned with this substitution; that is, with the corruptions of the engagement and the extensions of the alternatives required to make them serve the current 'needs of the nation'.
- 8 When Thomas Huxley regretted the absence of 'science' from the school curriculum, what he regretted was the absence of the opportunity for a learner to acquire an 'outfit drawn from the stores of physical science', 'a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century'.
- 9 Renan opposed 'positive science' to the 'superficial humanism' of school education and recognized it as a moral culture.
- 10 In the confusion of para. 25 of the Report of the Committee on Higher Education it is allowed that a few undergraduates may go to a university for the marginally different extrinsic purpose of acquiring 'pure knowledge' (which also has to be found a 'social function' in order to become visible); but no one is credited with going for no extrinsic purpose at all but merely to continue his education, because the possibility of any such activity as being educated is ruled out in advance.



# 'Needs' in education

R. F. Dearden

THE concept of 'need' is being increasingly widely used in educational discussions nowadays. Frequently the main weight of the writer's argument is borne by it. This is especially the case in discussions about curriculum construction at all levels of education and in certain theories in educational psychology. A few examples may be given to illustrate this.

In the handbook published by the former Ministry of Education called *Primary Education* there is mentioned 'the awareness of the child as a whole with inter-dependent spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical needs'.<sup>1</sup> Concerning secondary education, the Spens Report said that 'before everything else *the school should provide for the pre-adolescent and adolescent years a life which answers to their special needs . . .*'<sup>2</sup> More recently the National Union of Teachers published a report on secondary education in which it was said that 'a primary principle in curriculum construction should be to serve individual needs'.<sup>3</sup> Again, in *Primary Education in Scotland*, a recent publication of the Scottish Education Department, we find that the first chapter is devoted, not to a discussion of relevant 'aims of education', but to 'the needs of the child', which turn out to be just five in number.<sup>4</sup> In educational psychology the concept of needs is used in discussions of the motivation of learning. There is the process called 'need-reduction', which derives from Hull's learning theory, and there is the kind of need which the social psychologists are interested in, such as the need for love or for participation in the group.

Perhaps these indications will suffice to substantiate the statement, which might in any case have been readily conceded, that the concept of 'need' is being heavily worked these days. However, anyone who is unconvinced of this might well turn to the multitude of examples assembled by R. D. Archambault a few years ago in the *Harvard Educational Review*,<sup>5</sup> showing how 'need' is coming to be relied on to settle all sorts of questions. But can any questions be settled by a reference to 'need'? Is it simply a matter of carrying out the relevant piece of research to determine what children's needs are, so that problems of the curriculum and of learning, which have been

somewhat intractable and centres of dispute in the past, can now be handed over to the sociologist or psychologist for definitive solution? In other words, are questions as to what people need purely empirical? Indeed, in view of the vacuity of some exhortations to have regard to needs, do needs-statements have any empirical basis at all?

It is with such misgivings as these in mind that the following attempt is made to explicate the logic of the concept of 'need', that is, to show what it means and how needs-statements are to be justified. This analysis will then be used to try to answer the questions just raised so far as they refer to curriculum construction and to learning theory. The assumption is made throughout, and none of the works referred to contradicts it, that 'need' is not a technical term but is used just as it is in non-specialized language. As C. A. Mace once said in a discussion of need: 'It is not a technical term, it is in common use, and it is perhaps less ambiguous than any of the alternatives that might be suggested.'<sup>6</sup> On the point of ambiguity, however, judgment must be deferred.

### The concept of 'need'

In trying to explicate the logic of the concept of 'need' it must be pointed out at the start that there are some things one is *not* trying to do. First of all, nothing is being said about the motives which people may have in talking of needs. If I say to a pupil that he needs to work harder for his examination, my motive might be to improve my reputation as a teacher through the results for which I urge him to strive. Just what it is that people have in mind obviously varies greatly and may be commendable or otherwise. Secondly, nothing is being said about the variety of functions which needs-statements may be used to perform in different contexts. They may be used, for example, to explain, concede, recommend, justify, warn, advise, exhort and so on, and this variety again does not directly concern us. Finally, where the emphasis is placed in statements of need varies considerably also. The stress may be on who it is that is in need, or on the fact that this is a case of *need*, or on what it is that is asserted to be needed. This, too, does not directly concern us. But whatever a person's motive might be in making a needs-statement, whatever function it might be performing and wherever the emphasis might be placed, it may reasonably be supposed, since the same word is used on each occasion, that there are certain criteria which have to be satisfied if the word is to be used at all, or at least advisedly. It is the explication of these criteria that one has in mind in referring to the concept of 'need'.

Perhaps the most obvious criterion of need is that a state of affairs conceived of is absent: people are without food, children are without love, or pensioners are without the means of living comfortably. Alternatively, it may be that the state of affairs conceived of is not in fact absent but could well be, so that there is a real contingency that has to be provided against. We may agree that men need food without first enquiring whether anyone is actually without it. But this is not enough. For a need to exist, something more is required than that a state of affairs conceived of be absent. A child may lack musical or artistic ability without thereby being placed in need of those talents. A school may lack a swimming pool, tennis courts or greenhouse without necessarily being in need of them. The absence of a state of affairs does not create a need unless this absence *ought not* to exist, for example, because then a rule would not be complied with, or a standard would not be attained, or a goal would not be achieved. In short, 'need' is a normative concept and, as such, needs are not to be determined just by research into what is observably the case. Since this normative aspect of 'need' will prove of great importance in seeing how far sociologists or psychologists can settle questions of need, some illustrations to bring out this aspect more clearly will now be given.

The pensioners' need of an increased pension is not established by pointing out facts about their circumstances. By comparison with people in some parts of the world they live very comfortably indeed. The perception of the *inadequacy* of their circumstances presupposes a certain standard of living being regarded as so desirable that people ought not to be allowed to fall below it. In short, social norms are implied in talk about pensioners' needs, norms which vary so much from society to society that what is regarded as a need in one is a luxury in another. This particular type of norm is discussed at length by S. I. Benn and R. S. Peters.<sup>7</sup> Again, very many statements of need presuppose norms of the *proper functioning* of a thing, for example of an institution such as a school, of a piece of machinery such as a car, of an organism such as a rat, or of a trade or profession, such as being a carpenter or a schoolteacher. This is the case when it is said that a school needs a certain teacher-pupil ratio, a car needs a new engine, a rat needs water or a carpenter needs a tool allowance. Finally, this normative aspect of 'need' may be illustrated by cases where an explicit rule creates a need, as when it is said that owners of dogs need a licence for them, or students need at least two A-levels to be considered for a place in a university.

There are, of course, many different types of norms or standards that may be presupposed by needs-statements, and if it were our purpose to classify these statements it would be convenient to do so

according to the type of norm presupposed. However, such distinctions as are to be made here will be made only as they become necessary. A fuller discussion of them has been attempted by P. W. Taylor.<sup>8</sup> But there is one sort of case that must briefly be considered, since on the face of it no norm or standard such as is here being insisted on is presupposed. This is the common case in which something is needed, not in order to attain a social standard, properly fulfil a function or satisfy a rule, but in order to achieve a particular purpose, as when we need a hammer to knock in a nail, a pencil to sketch a picture or a dictionary to find a meaning. Although the emphasis in these cases is on what is needed and away from any standards, nevertheless standards are being presupposed: standards of appropriateness or of efficiency. Why is it a pencil that I need and not a stick of charcoal or a poker? Why is it a hammer that I need and not a shoe, a brick or a paperweight? Why consult a dictionary when I could enquire of other people? Such questions cannot be answered without making explicit the standard presupposed in this kind of needs-statement. Indeed, the fact that purposive human activity implies standards is of some importance for a proper understanding of activity methods in teaching, but it would be too much of a digression to pursue that particular point in this article.

So far, then, two criteria have emerged for the application of the concept of 'need'. In order of logical priority they are, first, that there should be some kind of norm, for example a standard of living, the 'proper functioning' of a thing, an explicit rule or a notion of what it is to do something properly or efficiently. Secondly, there is the matter of fact that this norm has not been achieved, or could well fail to be maintained. These two criteria seem to be sufficient for saying that someone is 'in need'. The subsequent discussion will justify the importance of remarking here that being 'in need' is not necessarily a state of which the person concerned is aware. He may be or may not. In this respect being 'in need' is different from actually wanting something. As Benn and Peters put it: 'To say that a man *wants* food is simply to describe his state of mind; to say that he *needs* food is to say that he will not measure up to an understood standard unless he gets it.'<sup>9</sup>

It must be admitted that there are, however, some uses of 'want' in which it serves the same function as 'need'.

If we wish to go beyond saying that someone is 'in need' to saying what exactly it is that is needed, in order to measure up to the norm or standard implied, then a third criterion must be satisfied, namely that what is said to be needed really must be the relevant condition for achieving what the norm prescribes. For example, if I am in poor health then the remedy offered as being what I need really must be

the relevant condition of achieving 'good health'. Again, if it is a certain amount of increased pension which the pensioners are said to need, then this amount really must be the relevant condition of their attaining the standards of living desiderated. The point seems obvious enough not to need further illustration.

To conclude this analysis, it will now be considered to what extent a needs-statement is empirically based, as this will be of importance in the following discussion of how far questions in education can be settled by a statement of needs. As was just remarked (second criterion), it is a question of fact whether or not a particular norm is being attained. For example, some sort of social survey is required to establish how the pensioners are faring. Often the diagnosis of the condition associated with a need requires specialized knowledge, for example as to just how a car's engine is failing to function properly or just what the nature of an illness is. But whether it is common sense or specialized knowledge that is required, so long as the question is only whether a norm is being attained, or in what precise manner it is not being attained, then it can be settled objectively, either by making observations it is open to anyone to make or by the more sophisticated procedures of an appropriate science or research technique. This conclusion holds too if the question concerns the relevant condition for attaining the norm (third criterion). Here too common sense may suffice ('it's a hammer that you need'), or a more sophisticated enquiry into cause and effect may be called for ('it's vitamin B<sub>12</sub> that persons suffering from anaemia need'). It can be seen then that needs-statements do at least have an empirical basis. They can, accordingly, be empirically refuted, for example by pointing out that the norm is in fact being attained ('our survey shows that pensioners already receive . . .'), or by showing that what is said to be needed will not in fact do the trick and so cannot be what is really needed ('the increase proposed would not even match the rising cost of living').

But what of the norms? They can neither be 'discovered' nor empirically refuted, since they indicate how things ought to be in various ways. Questions as to desirable standards, proper functioning, desirable rules or what appropriateness and efficiency are cannot be determined by observation or experiment, though this does not mean that they are arbitrary or insusceptible of being reasoned about. It does mean, however, that conflicts of opinion may be expected here, that in some cases the conflict may be very intractable and that since decisions may be involved, not just discoveries, we are bound to ask by what authority sociologists, psychologists and specialists of other sorts presume to settle for us questions of need. Indeed one of the purposes of this article is to sift out the debatable

### *'Needs' in education*

from the definitive in educational discussions which revolve around 'need'. Needs-statements considered at this level (first criterion) are rebutted, not by adducing certain facts, but by rejecting the norm being presupposed. If you say that in my emaciated condition I need food, I may refuse to attach any importance to the norms of health that you are presupposing, pointing out that I am engaged in a religious exercise; if you say that children need love, I may refuse to attach any importance to the ideal of a co-operative, affectionate and trusting character you presuppose, pointing out that we of the Mundugumor admire a different sort of character; and if you say that the curriculum must make provision for such needs as those for instruction in petting, party-organizing, dating, budgeting and driver-training, I may reject the norm of happy social adjustment that you are presupposing. Plainly, then, although questions of need have an empirical basis, they cannot *ultimately* be settled empirically, for the norms presupposed have to be thrashed out by the non-specialist procedures of argument and debate. Where, however, there already exists a consensus on norms, either as a shared assumption or as a formal declaration of some sort, then specialist researches, resting on a background of common agreement, may well settle questions of need, since in those cases it is only at an empirical level (criteria two and three) that the question is an open one.

have point in that they lay down something called 'broad policy'. Reports which urge us to consider 'individual needs', or the 'special needs' of some group, may serve to draw attention to something that is being neglected, or to get us facing in what the authors consider to be the right direction. Whether this is a valuable thing to do will depend, of course, on the backing which is offered for regarding these to be real needs at all (the normative question), and on what it is we are supposed to see when we face in the right direction, assuming that more than a bare formula for a recommendation is being offered. These are points about 'broad policy' which must always be raised in order to determine whether we are being offered mere pap, or something of greater substance. Obviously particular cases must each be considered on their merits, but enough misgivings have been raised to justify automatic suspicion of curricular discussions which revolve around 'need'.

### **'Need-reduction'**

The concept of 'need' is put to more than one use in current educational psychology. In what follows its use in the 'need-reduction' account of learning will be considered and then the use of need which has been made important by the social psychologists. It is not for a philosopher to comment upon the research which is behind these uses of 'need', or to pass judgment upon the satisfactoriness of such things as the experimental designs involved, but there may be some conceptual points which ought to be made and the present discussion will be confined to making them, still always on the assumption that 'need' is not a technical term.

The notion of learning as a reinforcement which accompanies the process of 'need-reduction' derives from the learning theory of Clark Hull. Hull says: 'When a condition arises for which action on the part of the organism is a prerequisite to optimum probability of survival of either the individual or the species, a state of need is said to exist.'<sup>1</sup> Since Hull has in mind such experimentally controllable states in rats as being made hungry or being placed on an electrified grille, it may readily be agreed that to call these 'states of need' conforms to normal usage and assumption. These 'states of need' which Hull refers to are states in which arises a tension initiating activity that does not terminate until the tension is reduced. Whether the activity has the purpose of bringing about this relief, or whether that result is a contingent accompaniment of the activity, is not always clear, but perhaps it is not very important for the present discussion. From an experimental point of view, however, an important feature of this account is that 'reduction of need' can be

made conditional upon performing some learning task which the experimenter is interested in. It is this, apparently, which makes Hull's theory relevant to education, according to E. A. Peel in his book *The Psychological Basis of Education*.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the virtues of Hull's elaborate theory may be in relation to the behaviour of animals, the suggestion that the notion of 'need-reduction' has an application in the education of children has about it the appearance of being immoral, for by what right may a teacher artificially induce in children states of need marked by tensions only to be relieved on condition of performing some task? And if children should already be in such states of need, surely they ought to be attended to unconditionally? The fact that children are moral beings makes all the difference, compared with rats, as to how they may permissibly be motivated. However, a closer reading of Peel reveals that these fears are largely groundless, and it seems that Hull's theory of 'need-reduction' is being misapplied on account of a superficial analogy between ordinary human learning taking place as part of a purposeful activity, and animal activity induced by a state of tension and terminating with relief.<sup>15</sup> There are two points which should be made about this.

First, it is of course perfectly true that in teaching we do regard children as needing various things: to learn to read, write, do sums and so on. Even outside school, parents too are concerned with what children need if they are to be brought up properly. As Rousseau constantly reiterated: 'Give him, not what he wants, but what he needs.' The important point to notice, however, is that such talk refers to Hullian states of need only in certain emergencies, or when something is going seriously wrong with the child. 'States of need' comparable to what Hull was referring to are exceptional. In education, 'need' refers not to a psychological state that the child is in but to what it would be educationally valuable to learn. The child needs to gain skill in reading, proficiency in arithmetic, a knowledge of geography and so on, not to have personal tensions relieved. A child in that condition would need treatment, not teaching.

The second point concerns motivation. Of course, if children are to learn what they need to learn, they must be motivated, and here lies the superficial analogy with Hull's rats. But to motivate children by inducing, or capitalizing upon, states of need is something we have seen reason to regard as immoral. In fact their motivation is very varied (as indeed Peel goes on to explain). They may want to please the teacher, pass an examination, gain a house point, have some work displayed or avoid a penalty, to mention some common forms of extrinsic motivation. Some at least come to be intrinsically



motivated, by interest in the subject, pleasure in proof, concern for style and so on. In all cases, however, if they are to learn they must be motivated by something, as Peel says. They must be brought to *want* to learn, or to want *something else the attainment of which is made conditional upon learning*. But wanting something is not being in a Hullian state of need. No doubt if I want something there are various things I shall need in order to get it (norms of efficiency are being presupposed here), but the wanting is not *itself* a 'state of need' which must be 'reduced', somewhat after the manner of too great a head of water behind a dam. That Peel unfortunately confuses wanting with being in a state of need which must be reduced is clear from the following: '*. . . in the remedial process the first emphasis is on finding a need which can be reduced by the particular S-R bonds (correct reading, writing and arithmetic) which it is desired to reinforce or learn. The first task is to make the child want to learn*'.<sup>16</sup> No doubt there is a place, perhaps even a large place, for laying down conditions for the satisfaction of wants in the classroom and at home, but this kind of extrinsic motivation is just common sense, not a 'theory' of anything. Hull's theory of need-reduction as applied to education would therefore seem to be either a case of common sense unhelpfully redescribed, or else immoral. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, to find standard textbooks of educational psychology which make no mention of it at all.

### **Social psychological needs**

The use of the concept of 'need' finally to be considered seems to have originated in the study of maladjusted and delinquent children by such psychologists as J. Bowlby. About this use of need C. M. Fleming says the following:<sup>17</sup>

The word is admittedly unsatisfactory because of the temptation it offers to loose thinking. Correctives to this can be found only in its limitation in this context to those psychological requirements which are common to all human beings by virtue of their humanity. The most significant of these appear to be: the receiving of appreciation or affection . . . the sharing in co-operative endeavour . . . and the conditions contributing to growth . . .

Two further features of this use of 'need' must be noticed for the present purpose: 1. 'This interpretation in terms of needs, it is to be noted, is an interpretation of human behaviour at a level of which human beings are unaware,' and 2. 'The concept is admittedly a hypothesis—an inference from certain observable data.'<sup>18</sup>

Before commenting upon this new kind of need, brief mention must be made of the sort of empirical basis which it has. It has been suggested, for example by Bowlby, that a childhood spent without warmth and affection enjoyed in a stable relationship with a mother, or mother-substitute, results in a later incapacity for giving ordinary affection, engaging in normal sexual relationships or concentrating long on anything in particular.<sup>19</sup> Such 'affectionless' children were prominent in an investigation Bowlby made into delinquency. This correlation of maternal deprivation with later being 'affectionless' is taken as evidence for saying that we *need* warmth and affection during childhood. We also *need*, Fleming says, to share in co-operative endeavours, and the evidence for this is a correlation between over-protectiveness, with little chance to co-operate, and later irresponsibility and rebellion. In each case correlation is taken to identify a causal factor.

The first thing to be said about these findings is that if they are true, and so far as the empirical question of correlation is concerned the question of truth is one which the psychologists must be left to decide, they may well be of very great importance; for to have discovered the cause of an undesirable state of affairs is to have taken the first step towards avoiding it, namely, of finding out at what point it is best to intervene. But our present concern is not with the research behind those findings but with the logic of 'need' as used here. It may be recalled from the analysis offered earlier that there were three criteria for its use to be distinguished, namely, a norm or standard, the fact of its not being attained and the fact that what is said to be needed really is the relevant condition of its attainment. With those criteria in mind it becomes apparent that the psychologist's use of 'need' which we are now considering is in fact a conflation of science and ethics.

As a *scientist*, the psychologist is concerned to establish matters of fact, for example as to whether maternal deprivation is correlated with later being an 'affectionless' character, whether over-protectiveness correlates with later being irresponsible, and so on. But it is a further question whether, on the basis of what is established, we attribute *needs* to people, for that presupposes certain norms as to which among human characteristics it is desirable to foster. As a *scientist*, the psychologist is entitled to say only 'if A, then B—that is how things are'; 'if you treat people . . . , then . . . results'; or alternatively, 'if such-and-such a character is *assumed* as being desirable, then such and such a course of action will be needed'. What he is not entitled to say, just as a psychologist, is that such-and-such categorically is needed. If he does say this, he is going beyond theoretical science and offering his practical advice as a

man. This is not at all to deny the possible excellence of his advice; it is only to make a point about the logic of needs-statements. To say that children need to share in co-operative endeavour, or to receive appreciation and affection, is not 'a hypothesis—an inference from certain observable data', but a piece of advice, based on empirically established correlations it is true, which presupposes an ethical preference for certain sorts of characteristics over others.

What is the importance of this point? If these ethical preferences are in line with the consensus of opinion, then the psychologist reflects the common assumption and additionally brings forward empirical evidence to show how the agreed norms can more effectively be realized. In that case the logical distinction just drawn attention to is of small practical importance. Indeed, by attaching the prestige of science to what common consent would agree is a desirable course of action, the psychologist may serve the useful function of getting changes made where goodwill alone did not suffice, or where conscience had not been aroused. As Barbara Wootton points out, it was hardly the *undesirability* of maternal deprivation that Bowlby could have proved,<sup>20</sup> he just made it less easy to ignore, for example in institutions.

However, if the ethical preferences behind a psychologist's needs-statements do not reflect a consensus, then he is, perhaps unwittingly, a propagandist for a particular ethical point of view, and the distinction between the scientific evidence and the norm which creates needs out of it becomes important to make. Thus American research which takes place against a background of assumption that might for convenience be called the 'American Way of Life' may lose its warrant for issuing in needs-statements when it is exported in textbooks to other cultures which have significantly different ideals. In short, although some needs-statements could be regarded as invalid only by a misanthrope<sup>21</sup> ('psychological requirements which are common to all human beings by virtue of their humanity'), others may well be culture-bound, for all their scientific support, such as these mentioned by Young: 'the need to maintain one's status within one's group, the need to win pre-eminence, the need to save one's face, the need to avenge an affront, and so on'.<sup>22</sup> Psychologists' needs-statements (as also those of the sociologist) ought, therefore, to be sifted through with this possibility always in mind. It may be added that 'need' is not the only concept which facilitates such a conflation of scientific with ethical questions; others like it common in psychological writing include 'mental health', 'wholesome development', 'maladjustment', 'democratic' and 'autonomous'.

## Summary and conclusion

It was remarked at the beginning that the concept of 'need' is being very heavily worked in current educational literature, so much so that one might well have misgivings as to whether it can properly do all that is being asked of it. To help consider this, an analysis of the concept was offered which found three criteria for its proper use. These were: 1. a norm or standard; 2. the fact that the norm is not being achieved, and 3. the fact that what is said to be needed really is the relevant condition of achieving the norm. Whereas criterion one could not be settled empirically, criteria two and three raised empirical questions properly to be settled either by ordinary observation or by research.

In connexion with needs and the curriculum it was argued that any attractiveness that 'need' might have for solving the motivational problem could well be illusory, since 'X needs Y' does not at all imply that 'X wants Y'. 'Need' was found to share with 'interest' an important ambiguity which should not be slurred over, as it bears upon a fundamental cleavage in thinking about the curriculum. It was recognized that general injunctions about needs could conceivably have an important point to make, but that they were more likely to be high-sounding platitudes.

Hull's theory of 'need-reduction' when applied to education was found to be either immoral or an unhelpful redescription of what was just common sense. Whereas in Hull's theory 'need' refers to a state in an organism which gives rise to a tension, in education it refers to what ought to be learned.

Psychological needs were seen to involve a conflation of scientific with ethical questions. Correlations are scientifically established and are relevant to criterion three of need, but criterion one raises ethical questions where this type of need is concerned. Where there is a consensus on the ethical question, however, it is the scientist who has the important points to make; but where normative assumptions significantly differ, needs-statements may be culture-bound and become invalid when exported.

It would appear, then, that the concept of 'need' is an attractive one in education because it seems to offer an escape from arguments about value by means of a straightforward appeal to the facts empirically determined by the expert. But if the foregoing analysis is correct, it is false to suppose that judgments of value can thus be escaped. Such judgments may be assumed without any awareness that assumptions are being made, but they are not escaped. The deceptively value-free concept of 'need' does more than foster the illusion of being purely empirical, however, for its use often leaves

obscure just what the values are that are being assumed, even when attention is turned to making these assumptions explicit. For example, curricular discussions revolving round 'children's needs' often leave it uncertain whether it is individual or social values that are being presupposed, and whether it is needs as children feel them to be or needs as teachers think they ought to be which are involved. Yet it is extremely important to be clear about this. Value-judgments are inescapable in determining what ought to be done in education; and if, therefore, discussions are to be framed in terms of 'need', then the valuational basis of the concept, and the subservience of the relevant research findings to this, should be explicitly recognized.

## Notes

- 1 *Primary Education*, H.M.S.O., 1959, p. 10.
- 2 *Secondary Education*, H.M.S.O., 1939, p. 149.
- 3 *The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, N.U.T., 1952, p. 23.
- 4 *Primary Education in Scotland*, H.M.S.O., 1965, ch. 1.
- 5 R. D. Archambault, 'The concept of need and its relation to certain aspects of educational theory', *Harvard Educational Review*, winter 1957.
- 6 C. A. Mace, 'Homeostasis, needs and values', *Br. J. of Psychology*, August 1953, p. 201.
- 7 S. I. Benn and R. S. Peters, *Social Principles and the Democratic State*, Allen & Unwin, 1959, ch. 6, sec. 3.
- 8 P. W. Taylor, '"Needs" statements', *Analysis*, 1958-9, pp. 106-11.
- 9 *Op. cit.*, p. 143.
- 10 H. H. Giles *et al.*, *Exploring the Curriculum*, New York, Harper, 1942.
- 11 B. O. Smith, W. O. Stanley and J. H. Shores, *Fundamentals of Curriculum Construction* (revised edition), New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957, ch. 15, sect. 2.
- 12 B. P. Komisar, '"Need" and the needs-curriculum', in *Language and Concepts in Education*, ed. B. O. Smith and R. H. Ennis, Chicago, Rand McNally, 1961.
- 13 C. L. Hull, *Principles of Behaviour*, New York, Appleton-Century, 1943, p. 57.
- 14 E. A. Peel, *The Psychological Basis of Education*, Oliver & Boyd, 1956, ch. 3 *et passim*.
- 15 For an extended discussion of the discrepancies between ordinary 'mentalistic' concepts and the concepts of behaviourist learning theory, see C. Taylor, *The Explanation of Behaviour*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.
- 16 E. A. Peel, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- 17 C. M. Fleming, *Teaching: A psychological analysis*, Methuen, 1959, p. 32.
- 18 *Ibid.*

- 19 The fact that this thesis has its critics is irrelevant to the present discussion, which is not concerned with the truth of particular examples but with their use to illustrate logical points.
- 20 B. Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology*, Allen & Unwin, 1959, ch. 7.
- 21 See R. S. Peters, 'Mental health as an educational aim', in *Aims in Education*, ed. T. H. B. Hollins, Manchester University Press, 1964, on the possibility of such basic psychological needs.
- 22 P. T. Young, *Emotions in Man and Animal*, New York, Wiley, 1943, p. 150.

# Education as a process of growth

R. F. Dearden

4

## Introduction

MANY educationists have conceived of education, and still do conceive of it, as a process of growth. On the face of it, that they should have done so may seem neither surprising nor objectionable. For after all, education is concerned with people, and people live and therefore grow. Neither is the notion of 'growth' a technical one confined solely to the writings of these educationists, and stipulatively defined by them. Governments keep an eye on economic growth, or the lack of it. Historians trace the growth of institutions and botanists observe the growth of plants. Again, ideas, habits, attitudes, abilities, understanding and convictions can all properly be said to grow.

Clearly there are important differences between these many kinds of growth, though some common features do seem to be present in them all. For instance, in each case there seems to be a sequence of changes in which the growing thing increases, perhaps in size, or perhaps in differentiation of structure or function. Again, this sequence of changes is unified by being thought of as having a direction. It is towards an optimum, or at least in some sense a more perfect state or form of the thing in question, and hence is to be contrasted with change which is regarded as decline or decay. In being thought of as having a direction, the process has a relative independence attributed to it. It is not just an externally determined process but is at least in part determined by some internal principle which is responsible for the direction that the process has. What kind of internal principle this might be, and in what form of increase its operation might become manifest, would depend, of course, on the nature of the thing in question.

Educationists who have thought in terms of 'growth' have normally been characterized as 'child-centred'. This notion of being 'child-centred' is itself far from being a clear one, but at least one meaning can now be given to it which would show just how natural it is for 'growth' theorists to be thought of in such terms. For since

there is some internal moving principle which is responsible for any process of growth, then growth will be a process which is logically non-transferable. That is to say, only the child can do his own growing; there is no sense in which I can do it for him, even if I happen to be his teacher and he my pupil. If, therefore, becoming educated is indeed a process of growth, then it too must be regarded as non-transferable, and we shall thus have arrived at the growth theorist's familiar dictum that 'all education is self-education'. And this conclusion thus gives us at least one sense in which education might be regarded as being 'child-centred': it is something which must come from the child himself.

But who exactly are the theorists I am here referring to? Rousseau was perhaps the first of the traditional 'great educators' to see education as a process of growth. His conception of it introduced into education the valuable notion of 'developmental stages', with the result that educational objectives and teaching methods were seen to be in need of close adaptation to a child's present stage of development. This, it would be agreed, was a marked advance over viewing children as being scaled-down adults, who could therefore be confronted with expectations no different in kind from those appropriate to adults.

Historically, however, Froebel's conception of growth was the more immediately influential in British education. In his *Education of Man*, Froebel explicitly likened education to the biological unfolding of inner potentialities. On his view there are entirely comparable times, set by the 'laws of growth', at which the flower blooms, the chick scratches, the duckling takes to water and the child plays. Where the child is concerned, the 'laws' governing these stages are at once laws of nature and laws to be obeyed. They describe what happens, or rather what would happen if we did not abort it, and they prescribe what ought to happen, or rather set us cautionary norms to observe.

Theorists of the present century in this tradition have included Edmond Holmes, John Dewey, Sir Percy Nunn, Arnold Gesell and Piaget to a certain extent. In a book referred to by the historian W. H. Armytage as 'the manifesto of the English progressives',<sup>1</sup> Edmond Holmes displayed the biological analogies often behind thinking of education as growth when he asserted that 'the perfect manhood which is present in embryo in the new-born infant, just as the oak-tree is present in embryo in the acorn, will struggle unceasingly to evolve itself'.<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, by contrast, rejected this biological analogy as offering no more than 'a vague sentimental aspiration',<sup>3</sup> and substituted instead a conception of growth as an essentially social, rather than a natural process, identified by his two



teacher must be rather like a gardener. As one writer recently chose to express it: 'a classroom is a garden of children and the green-fingered teacher who knows their needs at every crucial stage can watch them grow and blossom.'<sup>6</sup>

### Growth and determinism

A point of general difficulty about growth theories of education is that of seeing how *education* is really possible at all if they are true. For however differently we may conceive of education, it does at least imply the occurrence of learning, and hence in some sense the modification of the 'inner' by the 'outer'; for learning is to be contrasted, not identified, with maturational change. This is most obviously the case where facts have to be learned, since belief has then to be in conformity with external reality, and not vice versa. This general difficulty is presented in a very obvious way by an assertion about growth made by Gesell: 'The total ground plan is beyond your control. It is too complex and mysterious to be altogether entrusted to human hands. So nature takes over most of the task, and simply invites your assistance.'<sup>7</sup> But if the process of education is a natural one, how can the teacher 'assist'? Is there not an unnoticed and unremarked species of determinism implied here which excludes not only the teacher and the social environment, but also the child himself, as a conscious, choosing agent, from any alteration to or departure from his original nature and its poten- tialities for growth? This is an implication of their conception which growth theorists seem never to have faced, so that it is necessary to look outside educational theory for an example in which this implication is explicitly accepted and fully worked out.

A good classical formulation of this sort of determinism, with its echoes of predestination, is in fact provided by Schopenhauer.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps significantly, Schopenhauer was a contemporary of Froebel in Germany, and breathed the same air of Romanticism. Schopenhauer took it as axiomatic that everything which exists must, by the very fact of existing, have a definite nature, or set of properties. That is to say, if we consider any set of descriptions which could intelligibly be predicated of an actual subject, then such descriptions must either apply or not apply. They cannot 'possibly' apply, unless this qualifier relates to our own hesitation in making a definite statement. Furthermore, everything which any subject 'does' will be determined by its nature, other things being equal. This is the Scholastic doctrine that *operari sequitur esse*. If these general principles are now applied to man, and more particularly to children, then the view will be that our nature, with all its potentialities of response and

change, is fixed at birth and then unalterable. Of course, this nature will become known to us only as it progressively reveals itself in our meeting with actual situations. We shall not necessarily be able actually to foresee with any certainty how we shall act, or how we shall grow, since experience is needed to reveal the hidden facets of our nature. That is fixed at birth. From this Schopenhauer concluded that important aspects of moral, aesthetic and intellectual education were in reality impossible of achievement. 'Virtue cannot be taught', and no more can artistic genius or intellectual ability, though we can speculate on the hereditary influences which determine them. Thus, for example, a person will be compassionate, malicious or egoistic by nature, or more likely some mixture of these three. These natural tendencies will always be with him, though they may not come to light for want of a corresponding situation to elicit them. Hence once more we may ask the question: how is education to be possible on such an hereditarian deterministic view?

There are two possibilities of learning discernible in Schopenhauer's own writing. First of all, he points out that before any natural tendency of ours can issue in action, there must be an appropriate knowledge of the situation. For instance, not only must I have a kind nature if I am to act kindly, but I must also perceive the occasions on which kindness is needed or would be appropriate. There must not only be something wanted, but also the particular judgment that here is a case of it, or that here is a means to it. But such a judgment is possible only through factual beliefs which have been arrived at by learning. In spite of the unalterability of our nature, there is thus present the educational possibility of modifying a person's factual beliefs, and hence of affecting the occurrence or non-occurrence of the actions which are in part dependent on having those beliefs. Schopenhauer gives as an example a man who abandons a life of crime for one of religious worship. Is this a change of nature? Not at all, for in the example as given the man is egoistic by nature and remains so: only his perception of how his interests can best be promoted has altered. This has given him a longer and better-informed view of how best to express his egoism.

The second possibility of education is through the development of an 'acquired character', superimposed upon our original and unalterable nature. We are not at the mercy of every impression and of every natural tendency which it elicits but can exercise a principled control over our actions. This principled control, however, can be no more than an activity of making consistent and definite our original nature. It is merely an endorsement of those tendencies

which are already psychologically dominant in us. If we are born malicious, we can become more deliberately and determinedly so, but we cannot reverse such tendencies under the influence of 'conscience', or in response to the demands of some Kantian categorical imperative, for instance.

But if there are, on Schopenhauer's view, only these two possibilities of *education*, there are yet at least two other forms of *control* which can be exercised over people, in pointing to both of which Schopenhauer is very reminiscent of Plato. First, there could be genetic control over the kind of people who are born into the world. Secondly, there could be, and of course in this case there are, institutions designed to bridle and control our natures, such as the institutions of law and government. For some, fear for their reputations or fear of divine displeasure might serve a similar bridling function. Controls of this kind can at least modify our outward conduct, even if they cannot modify our inner nature.

Of course, the question of what elements in our personality are determined by genetic factors is one which increasingly permits of a detailed scientific answer, and the scientist himself is accustomed to thinking of genetic and environmental factors in development as always being in intimate interaction with each other. Only very recently, however, have growth theories of education begun to gain this kind of scientific sophistication. And whether the growth theorist is scientifically sophisticated or not, there still remains to be explained the unworried attitude which, by implication at least, he has taken towards genetic determination. One thing he may say here is that he is quite unworried because he is in no way concerned externally to impose any other pattern of development on the child. He may even say that he is in no way at all concerned with value-judgments: he just wants children to grow. As Holmes put it: 'Let the end of the process of growth be what it may; our business is to grow.' Determinism is worrying only if you want children to turn out differently from the outcome of following their natural bent, and since this is not wanted then the bogey disappears. But neat as this move may appear to be, it is nevertheless quite unconvincing.

In the first place, the practitioner of the growth theory is in fact making choices all the time. He is therefore presupposing certain outcomes and not others as desirable, and hence is inescapably involved in value-judgments. The sparseness of such obviously evaluative terms as good and bad, or right and wrong, in his practical directions serves only to conceal the fact that he has a parallel horticultural vocabulary for making the judgments which are more usually expressed in obviously evaluative terms. Thus the

a more rigorously thought out position such as that of Schopenhauer. Indeed, it is this optimism which almost certainly has left the deterministic implications undrawn. Thus it was *perfect* manhood that was asserted by Holmes to be present in embryo in the newborn infant, while Nunn was ready to believe that the 'unperverted impulses of childhood' might very well 'have a biological bias towards the good'. In this they both followed Rousseau, who proclaimed: 'Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible rule that the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart.'<sup>12</sup> But there are at least three rather different things that might be meant by saying that we are by nature good; each of which deserves separate attention.

First of all, what might be meant is that natural growth is *by definition* good. It would immediately follow that the way to find out what is good would be closely to observe natural growth, for instance in children. But such a definitional move just will not do. Employing G. E. Moore's 'open question argument', we can point out that it is at least not logically redundant to ask whether natural growth is indeed good, even when we have been furnished with an observer's description of it. For to say that something so described is 'good' is not to utter a tautology but to make a judgment about it. It is to appraise the facts in the light of certain unspecified criteria for making value-judgments. Definitions cannot dispense with the need for making such judgments, and judging is an activity always distinguishable from simply observing and describing. Neither would the present view fare any better if it were presented in terms of inference rather than of definition. Value-judgments cannot be inferred, as an immediate inference, simply from descriptions of the facts of growth, since clearly those facts could be accepted but the 'conclusion' denied without any logical contradiction. An additional premise or principle of inference must be introduced before such a conclusion could validly be drawn. This amounts to another way of saying that judgment and description are two different activities, which cannot be made identical by such an arbitrary expedient as defining the one in terms of the other.

An obvious possible second meaning of 'natural goodness' is that the tendencies which children are in fact observed to have will also in fact be found to be good, as judged by 'our' criteria of value. Thus judgment is indeed admitted to be different from description, but it is nevertheless said that our judgment will certainly be favourable. Of course, this thesis can be, and sometimes has been, insulated from possible refutation by attributing all suggested counter-examples to pernicious environmental influences. If no such influences are to be found it might still be said that they must

view is acceptable only if a resolute and determined character has already been formed in a man and can then be taken for granted. For in this case, knowledge would indeed be sufficient for him to pursue the good. But in fact possibly all of us in some connexions lack the necessary will, though we have the knowledge, and are half grateful for external disciplines and institutional routines to make us do what we clearly recognize as good or right. Similarly with children, it is perhaps too readily assumed that because something is 'meaningful' to them, then one and all they will immediately be off in self-propelled activity in pursuit of it.

Secondly, what we want can, on the doctrine being considered, be tied only to what we think is good, but in thinking so we may in reality be quite mistaken. No doubt the pregnant women who wanted thalidomide tablets thought that they were good, but in fact they were not; they were disastrous. And so what we think to be good may in fact be bad, or less good than we expect, or good only on short-sighted and partial views. Crediting children with natural goodness, in the sense under consideration, will therefore be exciting only if they can also be credited with wise judgment as to what really is good, and that, to put it mildly, is not an immediately plausible contention.

Thirdly, if the good which is the formal object of desire is extended to cover other people's good, as well as our own, then two difficulties immediately break out. First, what is the evidence (for it is an empirical question) to show that children are always naturally aware of other people's good? This presents a difficulty because it seems to be obviously false. Alternatively, if it is nevertheless claimed that children are aware of other people's good, on what grounds is it asserted that they will therefore want to pursue it? The difficulty this time is that although it may be indefensible not to want another's good, it is not unintelligible. The connexion between our own desires and the good of others cannot therefore be grounded, as it was before, in any general condition of intelligibility, but must be made through the recognition of our moral obligations to others, or through our having benevolent inclinations towards them, both of which things are contingent only in their occurrence. They will depend on such contingencies as our having been morally educated.

In conclusion then, there seem to be two meaningful senses in which children could be said to be naturally good, though in the first of these it would be at least in part false to say it, and in the second sense it would be unexciting. If we mean that they are good as judged by 'our' criteria, then there seems to be a variable degree of truth in this, but there are also 'Old Adam' phenomena which must importantly qualify any absolute statement. If we mean that

look for rather different 'real selves' in their young. Secondly, the gap between natural tendency and cultural achievement is so great that it would be absurd to expect each child in each generation to cross it by spontaneously 'growing his own culture', without a great deal of learning and external modification of the 'inner' by the 'outer'.

A consequence of the cultural definition of the 'best self' which is to be realized is that this 'self' may well have no psychological reality in the child at all. Its unity is not a conscious unity of thoughts, feelings and desires actually to be found in the child, and actively growing there, but the unity of a particular cultural ideal. The 'self' to be realized is not the one which he is, but the one which it is desired that he should become. Quite apart from the difficulty of now seeing how this self can be thought of as 'growing', this curious mixture of biographical and evaluative concepts presents a further important difficulty for our understanding of personal freedom.

A person is free, one would have thought, if he can do what he wants to do without anyone impeding or constraining him in doing it. Of course, he might misuse his freedom, but that only shows that freedom is not the only thing that matters. As Bentham asked; 'Is not liberty to do evil liberty? If not, what is it? Do we not say that it is necessary to take liberty from idiots and bad men, because they abuse it?'<sup>18</sup> But self-realization theorists, and indeed a whole host of educationists, insist that freedom is not freedom when it is misused. Freedom for them extends only to the activities of the real self; any other tendencies are seen as forms of bondage or enslavement, and in stopping you from acting on them, and forcing you to do better, I am not interfering with your freedom but in fact 'forcing you to be free'. We may thus be confronted with the oddity of saying that someone is free when he is forced, and unfree when he does what he wants. Furthermore, since I am here the judge of what you must be forced to do, and freedom is therefore operationally defined as your doing what I want you to do, then I need have no regrets in curbing your desires. It is all for your good, and so 'really' I am not restricting your freedom at all. Thus at the level of political action, as we have recently seen, a government may feel licensed to send into a country its 'freedom tanks' in order to 'liberate' the people from doing what they want to do.

No doubt freedom in connexion with the political actions of adults raises different issues from freedom for children in the classroom. No doubt also we do sometimes have to restrict children's freedom for their own good, as in compelling them to go to school, for instance. But to see that these are still restrictions on and interferences with freedom is to keep in view the need for their justi-

even by the time that a child first starts formal schooling at five, influences have long been at work in shaping his interests and activities, with all the difficulties that must create for deciding what is 'his own'. Then again, how is the teacher to know when the inner agreement obtains which this criterion demands? Even the Plowden Report confesses that 'we are still far from knowing how best to identify in an individual child the first flicker of a new intellectual or emotional awareness, the first readiness to embrace new sets of concepts or to enter into new relations'.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, how is the teacher to discover not just when the required inner agreement obtains but also what the individual nature is with which activities must be in agreement? The educational process appears to have become impossibly private. Yet a further difficulty is created by the fact that, at least sometimes, grappling with external and imposed demands may be precisely the way in which a child finds himself, rather than loses himself. One is therefore not really surprised to find in the Plowden Report the otherwise curious admission that it may sometimes be necessary to 'force independence' on children who are slow to grasp it.<sup>22</sup>

The fundamental difficulty with this approach, however, lies with the privacy of the criteria which it emphasizes. If, for example, we consider an appreciative understanding of mathematics, science, history or social morality to be important aims of education, then we are not entirely free as to what we shall count as true or right in these areas. It is not just a question of what suits our individual natures, but of claims being made in accordance with objective criteria. Mathematical, scientific or historical truths are not just matters of what it especially pleases or suits us to assert, but of how things are, independently of our predilections. Again, 'to thine own self be true' can hardly be the supreme moral imperative unless this self is already a moral self, and we shall need further and less private criteria to know what kind of self that is. For morality concerns not only our own interests or good, but also those of others, which may clash with or require the sacrifice of our own. Unless we still stubbornly adhere to the view that children are naturally good, we shall have to admit that, in some respects at least, the less that children are themselves, the better. St Matthew asked 'what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' But again, it is not really a private matter that counts as 'losing one's own soul'. I do not 'lose my soul' if, for instance, I abandon malice and egoism for a more active and compassionate concern for others, assuming that change to be possible. The notion of 'soul' here, like the notion of 'self' in 'to thine own self be true', is already value-laden, and cannot simply be equated with any

criteria are very vague. For instance, the best thing for a particular individual's growth may be to specialize and go deeper in some activities while cutting out or minimizing others. The question of general education and specialization is an important one, but do these formal criteria in any way help here? Could not specialization be as much regarded as expansion, or as interaction having continuity? Some, however, might see in this vagueness a positive merit, since it would be wrong to suppose that we could know, once and for all and in advance, what was and what was not going to be valuable in any activity or line of development.

Another difficulty is that Dewey charges the teacher with seeing that continuities are assured in present experiences. But which continuities is the teacher to assure? Will he not need more substantive criteria to decide this? If this is once conceded, and it is hard to see how the concession can be avoided, then this third approach will surely collapse into the first, and become a plea for the particular kinds of growth that will be valued in one's society. In Dewey's case 'continuity' seems to have meant increase in social power and insight, or, roughly speaking, improvement in the social exploitation of natural resources. Science, history and art were thought by him to have educational relevance for the greater insight and control which they gave to social occupations.<sup>26</sup> If this view seems uncontroversial, it should be set against that of the Greeks.

Probably the most serious difficulty for Dewey, in seeking for criteria as he did within the individual's own continuum of experience, is in allowing for the demands of social morality. It is hard to see how morally evil selves could be excluded by the criteria of growth that he suggested. Do not the criminal, the gangster and the corrupt politician, to take Dewey's own examples, interact in activities which open up richer possibilities of further interaction in the future, of a wealthy and luxurious life in the Bahamas, for example? Dewey tried to deny that his continuity criterion was satisfied in such cases, but it seems clear that it could be satisfied by a life of *successful* crime, or ruthless egoism. Yet the immorality of crime does not rest on the contingency of its unsuccess. Where injustice is concerned, we do not establish it by seeing if our own psychic harmonies are going to be upset, but by an impartial consideration of the interests of all concerned.

Sometimes, however, Dewey speaks of 'interactive' situations in a way which suggests that he has already covertly imported morality into his definition of such situations. For it turns out that they are situations in which we accommodate and adapt to others, in which adult interventions are fair, and in which satisfactions are made widely accessible. Again, his 'occupations' reproduce the forms of



social work, and hence habituate us to ideas of service and of balancing getting by contributing. But to the degree that this is so, a possible gap may now open up between situations as so conceptually defined and situations as individuals themselves may actually see them. What guarantee can there now be that interaction is a criterion extracted from within the individual's own conscious experience, rather than an external demand with which the individual is socially faced? Dewey believed, and not altogether implausibly, that children simply were very interested in the sorts of occupation which he saw as constituting an educational situation. But since these situations had quite deliberately to be chosen and arranged by the teacher, the criteria behind their selection reflected adult knowledge and maturity, and so were not derived from any natural process of growth. Continuity was a criterion derived from a form of social life. It could be represented as a criterion of growth only because it was thought that children naturally wanted to become participant members of that form of social life.

## Conclusion

There are, then, many difficulties, obscurities and undrawn implications involved in regarding education as a process of growth. But perhaps three things stand out as being in need of special emphasis in a concluding appraisal. First of all, the European biological versions of growth theory do not do full and explicit enough justice to the relatively much greater knowledge of the more educated and experienced adults who are a child's parents and teachers, especially when these have had a professional training and have reflected on what they are doing. Whether it is openly admitted or not, a teacher must himself select among the possible experiences in which his children will be encouraged to share. This is an inescapable responsibility which ought to be explicitly avowed so that attention can be focused on it and its criteria can be examined. Out of the world of human experience, some things and not others must be chosen by the teacher as appropriate in a school. Such choice is unavoidable in ordering certain books and materials, in using certain media, in asking certain 'stimulating questions', in setting up a certain 'environment', in encouraging some things and discouraging others, in controlling social relations in the class according to certain expectations, and so on. To suppose that the teacher *could* come to the child unguided by any preference for some things rather than others, and open only to the guidance of the child's unfolding nature, is an impossibility that ought to be recognized as such. If not, what could consciously be reflected on and perhaps better chosen

will be left unexamined and remain perhaps merely private prejudice.

Secondly, growth theories are often naïve, and dangerously naïve, in their notions of 'environment', 'experience', 'stimulating' and 'choice'. For they assume that the world of human experience and achievement which a child enters in being educated is just manifest. In thinking this, it is not so much that the theories err in being child-centred, as that they are not child-centred enough. For they do not sufficiently appreciate how very different is the world of the child's experience from the world of an educated adult. The world of which the adult is aware just cannot be shown, pointed to, put on a table or supplied in the form of apparatus, no matter how richly coloured or attractive to use these things may be. What the child lacks is not objects but an understanding of them. The educational task is not only to enrich the world that is already open to him but also to transform the conceptions which are constitutive of that world. There are things that he neither knows, nor even suspects that he doesn't know, because he does not yet have the relevant concepts. Even something as apparently obvious as our idea of physical nature is an historical achievement, still only some few hundred years old. Again, a child's education is not like choosing from a menu, nor is it like an already educated adult's choosing among a range of leisure activities or evening courses: it is primarily entering into a selected cultural inheritance which has to be understood and cannot be experienced prior to gaining that understanding. Education, therefore, cannot be laid out, as Holt for instance wants it to be, like a *smörgåsbord*, to entice and be tasted by the pupil-consumers.<sup>27</sup> Of all the growth theorists, the one who alone seems at all fully to have realized this was Dewey, who set aside all biological and horticultural analogies for a conception of education as an essentially *social* process, and one in which our experience and understanding are constantly reconstructed and reorganized. What is underestimated or understressed in Dewey, however, is the extent to which the teacher must be an active interventionist and leader in this process, often having positively to explain, instruct and insist, as well as to guide and stimulate in less determinate ways.

But thirdly, the growth theorists have seen some things aright, and their positively acceptable contribution is an important, even indispensable condition of success. Principal among these insights is to see the importance of individual differences between children at different ages and stages. This is important in at least two ways. First of all, it is important if expectations, practices and methods are to be appropriately matched to children for them to understand and see significance in what they learn. Secondly, it is motivationally

important in that it is often an empirically necessary condition of a child's finding educational activities to be worthwhile that he finds satisfaction in engaging in them. For reasons already discussed, this is not a sufficient condition of their being worthwhile, since they might in fact be trivial, immoral, an educational dead-end, or reflective of an interest itself engendered by unworthy environmental influences. But satisfaction is necessary and without it, as Dewey said, even 'preparation for the future' will fail, and remain merely something peripheral to a child's real interests and concerns.

However, the contribution of growth theories to gaining a more adequate understanding of an educational situation is not confined to more efficient ways of learning and teaching, with former aims left much the same. For if what children are taught is to be valued *by them*, then it must be of such a kind that it can by degrees be made their own. Instead of remaining an alien 'school' affair, it must become deeply formative of their ways of thinking, feeling and acting, and this it will not do if it is entirely preconceived and uniformly imposed in advance of knowing anything of their own individual interests, preferences, choices and idiosyncracies. But on the other hand, this does not mean that the teacher must simply watch and observe, in order to take his directions from the crude individual natures already unfolding before his eyes. What he has to do is rather to find the right balance between pressure and permissiveness, between freedom and authority, between self-expression and submission to disciplines, which will enable each child to find the best in himself in terms of what we seriously think to be the best in our culture. What the growth theory has always done is at least to stress the side of that ideal balance which has typically been understressed in the more authoritarian kind of education which until quite recently was traditional.

## Notes

- 1 W. H. G. Armytage, *Four Hundred Years of English Education*, C.U.P., 1964, p. 277.
- 2 E. Holmes, *What Is and What Might Be*, Constable, 1911, p. 241.
- 3 J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Macmillan, 1916, ch. 5, sect. 2.
- 4 J. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Collier, 1938, ch. 3.
- 5 Sir Percy Nunn, *Education: its data and first principles*, 3rd ed., Arnold, 1945, p. 109.
- 6 W. Kay, *Moral Development*, Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 250.
- 7 A. Gesell and F. L. Ilg, *The Child from Five to Ten*, Hamish Hamilton, 1946, p. 6.
- 8 To be found especially in *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. 1, and in his essays on *The Freedom of the Will*, sect. 3 and *On the Basis of Morality*.

- 9 E. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 295.
- 10 O. B. Priestman, 'The influence of Froebel on the independent preparatory schools of to-day' in *Friedrich Froebel and English Education*, ed. E. Lawrence, U.L.P. 1952, p. 127.
- 11 Sir Percy Nunn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- 12 J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile*, 1762, bk 2.
- 13 Plato, *Protagoras*, 358c and *Meno*, 78a.
- 14 Plato, *Republic*, 505e and *Philebus*, 20d.
- 15 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a.
- 16 P. Geach, 'Good and evil', *Analysis* 1956-7.
- 17 E. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
- 18 Quoted in Sir Isaiah Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Clarendon Press, 1958, p. 33n.
- 19 Central Advisory Council for Education (England), *Children and their Primary Schools*, H.M.S.O., 1967, para. 507.
- 20 *Ibid.*, para. 505.
- 21 *Ibid.*, para. 9.
- 22 *Ibid.*, para. 874.
- 23 T. P. Nunn, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
- 24 For a discussion of these points see R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education*, Allen & Unwin, 1966, ch. 5, sect. 3.
- 25 J. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Collier, 1938.
- 26 See, for instance, Dewey's *Child and the Curriculum*, Chicago University Press, 1902, and *School and Society*, Chicago University Press, 1915.
- 27 Cf. 'School should be a great *smörgåsbord* of intellectual, artistic, creative, and athletic activities, from which each child could take whatever he wanted, and as much as he wanted, or as little.' J. Holt, *How Children Fail*, Pitman, 1964, p. 180.

# 'Mental health' as an aim of education

J. Wilson

In this chapter I want to defend the view that mental health can and should be an aim of education. Those who reject this view do so, I believe, partly at least because of common misunderstandings of the concepts of mental health and education: hence part of my task will be to give a (necessarily) brief account of these concepts, and to show that they fit logically in the way required.

'Mental health' is a name for nothing clear. The difficulties experienced by psychologists and others in reaching agreement about an adequate definition are partly caused by (but are partly also the cause of) a tendency to relapse into a culture-bound or relativist position, whereby what is 'mentally healthy' is taken to be what is accepted as mentally healthy in a particular social group: a position which is logically incoherent. This, however, is only one instance of a more general error: that of tying down the concept of mental health too tightly to empirical criteria (whether culture-bound or not).

It seems more sensible to hold that the defining characteristics of what is to count as a 'healthy mind' must (to put it very briefly) be reducible to characteristics which any rational person would wish to possess, or which are logically necessary for the concept of a rational person. As R. S. Peters has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> many terms used by psychologists ('autonomy', 'freedom from compulsion', 'reality-orientated', etc.) seem to fit this picture: but equally many others do not. Thus such criteria as 'freedom from anxiety' may be taken 1. as a defining characteristic of the rational person (i.e. freedom from *undue* or *unreasonable* anxiety), or 2. as a symptom or indicator of irrationality (if the person lived in conditions where in fact a rational man would not be anxious), or 3. as a prerequisite for developing rationality. Again, the *ability* to make friends or have a steady job might be a defining characteristic, since it is plainly an advantage to be able to do these things: but *actually to have many friends* or a steady job could be only an indicator (a very bad

indicator for prisoners in solitary confinement or people in an area of high unemployment).

But once we have freed the notion of mental health from unjust slavery to cultural or empirical criteria, we may be tempted to an opposite error. There is still a current fashion in education for using 'mental health', 'emotional maturity', 'personal development' and other phrases to cover any kind of increase in rationality or cognitive awareness. But 'mental health', at least, will not stretch so far. For example:

1. We do not talk of a man being ill or unhealthy unless there is some malfunction. There must be something wrong with him which makes him unable to do what we think he should normally be able to do (though what is to count as 'normally' may vary). Thus (a) a man is not physically ill if he has not been trained to do the high jump, and not mentally ill just because he has not been taught how to spell. Similarly (b) a man is not physically ill just because he is a dwarf who cannot jump high, or mentally ill just because he is too stupid to learn how to spell. Inability to perform 'normally' which is due to (a) lack of training or education, or (b) lack of what we may call 'natural resources' (height, basic intelligence), cannot count as ill health.<sup>2</sup>

2. Mental malfunction which is caused by (say) drugs, brain-washing or a blow on the head can indeed result in mental illness, but cannot be said *sans phrase* to result in irrationality. Thus a person who because of some glandular malfunction has a fit or falls into a coma behaves neither rationally nor irrationally: he is not behaving in that mode at all. He neither succeeds nor fails in any performance of those activities which characterize the rational man: e.g. facing the facts, having feelings which are appropriate to their objects, and so on. For he is not performing at all. He is in a non-rational (not irrational) state.

Steering a middle course between these two views, then, we can see that there is a *prima facie* overlap between part of the area we call 'lack of mental health' and part of the area we might call 'lack of education', as represented by the following schema:

MENTALLY ILL	UNEDUCATED
A Malfunctioning in the form of non-rationality	Malfunctioning in the form of irrationality Lack of knowledge, awareness, skills, etc. not due to malfunctioning
B Malfunctioning in the form of irrationality	
C	

### *'Mental health' as an aim of education*

The same point can be made by describing the overlap area simply as the area of irrationality. This excludes (A above) cases of non-rationality in mental illness (having fits, glandular deficiency, etc.); and also excludes (C above) cases of lack of knowledge not due to malfunctioning. Somebody who has not learnt how to read or write, or who has not been educated in respect of any other skills or forms of thought is not *pro tanto* irrational. His mind does not function well in these forms of thought; but this may be only because he lacks natural talent—it need not be because there is anything *wrong* (twisted, warped, unhealthy) with his mind. This is the difference, for instance, between a person who simply does not know any astronomy or cosmology on the one hand, and a person who peoples the universe with invisible gods and demons because he is unable to tolerate his ignorance on the other.

In so far as education is concerned with mental health, therefore, it will be because there are educational activities which develop various kinds of rationality (i.e. which do not *only* increase awareness in various fields) help people to develop their potentialities and improve their grasp of various forms of thought, but which *by* doing these things help to free people from irrationality (not just from ignorance). For example, one might try to increase a pupil's awareness of the physical world by telling him the facts about snakes and other animals, a process which might be justified on various grounds. But if we have a pupil whose irrational fear of snakes and other animals cripples his life, and if teaching him about them enables him to abandon those conscious or unconscious false beliefs which generate his anxiety, then we are also improving his mental health.

Of course, the notion of 'irrationality' requires a great deal more clarification: plainly there are many different kinds of irrationality—many different logical forms of this mode of mental illness. I shall return to this briefly at the end of the essay. Meanwhile I hope only to have pointed to one type of 'mental health' which 1. may be considered universally desirable, since it is not tied to questionable empirical criteria, and yet 2. is not simply a fashionable way of talking about any and every improvement that might be brought about by education.

Are we now to say, then, that to improve mental health in one of its modes is an *aim* of education? We might have two worries about saying this. First, we might remind ourselves that strictly speaking only people have aims, just as only people have intentions or purpose. We might interpret the question 'is mental health an aim of education?' as 'do people in fact consciously try to improve mental health

when they educate?' This is (partly) an empirical question, to which the answer is probably 'some do, others don't': but I do not think the answer important, since I do not think that this is the sense of 'aim' that most people have in mind when they ask the question. Secondly, we may adopt a sense of 'education' according to which a process cannot count as part of 'education' unless either 1. it contributes to or involves something that is worth-while or justifiable, and/or 2. it is intended to do so. By virtue of this sense, 'education' need not have 'aims' in the sense of extrinsic targets: its justification is, as it were, contained within itself.

This second worry has received extended treatment elsewhere<sup>3</sup> and I shall not discuss it here. The issue seems to be terminological rather than substantive: for those who ask about the 'aims of education' are asking, either about how what they do could be justified, or about whether there are other important things which they might and should do, under the aegis of 'education'. It makes little practical difference whether we phrase these as questions about

1. what does or could count as (by definition justifiable) 'education', or
2. what is or could be justifiable in existing or possible processes of education (defined purely descriptively).

Moreover, even if we cling to the view enshrined in 1., questions of justification still arise. For, first, granted that all that happens under the title of 'education' is or is thought to be justifiable, some things may be more important to do than others: and secondly, questions arise about the comparative importance of those worth-while things that come under the concept of education compared with those worth-while things that do not. For instance, first we would want to know whether the worth-while activity of learning Greek is more important than the worth-while activity of learning to understand other people: and secondly, we would want to know whether either of these worth-while (educational) activities are more important than the surely worth-while (non-educational) activities of, say, drinking wine or making money. It will be evident that these are severely practical questions, first for anybody allotting school time to one subject rather than another; and secondly, for anybody trying to decide how much time to make pupils spend in school being educated as against engaging in other activities.

Nevertheless, we might have reasons for not wanting to call mental health an aim of *education*. Earlier we distinguished between 1. simply increasing a pupil's awareness, and 2. increasing his awareness with the result that a mental malfunction or disturbance



## *'Mental health' as an aim of education*

was cleared up. Now we are taking the question 'is mental health an aim of education?' to mean not 'do educators consciously and deliberately aim at producing mental health when they educate?', but rather 'can we justify some educational processes by reference to mental health?'

We can now jump either of two ways:

1. We can say that certain educational processes just *are the same as* some processes which increase mental health: that some forms of teaching are identical with some forms of psychotherapy.
2. We can say that the concept of an educational process *definitely excludes* the concept of a therapeutic process: that teaching excludes curing.

If we take this second line, we shall have to argue quite simply that (for example) if the process of making a person aware of his own feelings, or of changing his false conscious or unconscious beliefs, results in clearing up a malfunction, then this process cannot count as teaching, but rather must be called 'therapy' or 'counselling' or 'psychoanalysis' or some such cure-orientated word.

But this again seems somewhat puristic. We are not here concerned with such criteria as the conscious intentions of the teacher/therapist, or whether he gets paid by the Department of Education and Science or the Department of Health and Social Security. We are concerned with the logical nature of the process and (if we seek to justify it) with its results. Hence the first of the two alternatives stated above seems preferable. To take a parallel, learning philosophy might for some students be both 'educational' and 'vocational training', if those students were going on to be professional philosophers. The intentions of those who purvey education may be in general different from the intentions of those who purvey vocational training, and the justification of those intentions may also be in general different: but what actually happens in some cases may display an overlap, and in the area of the overlap the process may be precisely the same.

It may still be argued that, although the *process* is identical, although it can be regarded as an educational process, and although *this educational process* has a result which justifies it, nevertheless the result does not justify it *educationally* but only *therapeutically*. Thus, similarly but conversely, a therapist in a mental hospital might question the actions of a nurse who taught the patients how to weave baskets or read Greek. He might say, 'This is all very educational, but we're here to cure people: can it be justified therapeutically? It's not an aim of *therapy* that people should improve their skills in handicraft or their knowledge of foreign languages.'

Or again, a businessman might say, 'That luncheon party may be justified on grounds of good fellowship, or pure pleasure: but if you're going to justify it and put it on your expense account as *business*, you'll have to show that it's likely to lead to more orders or some other way of making money for the company.'

One way of justifying X as Y is to show that X leads to ends, or satisfies criteria, which are conceptually built into Y: thus to justify something as research means to justify it as tending to advance human knowledge. Now many terms (therapy, business, research) do have very specific ends built into them in just this way. But many do not. Thus it is not clear what would be *meant* by asking somebody to justify something 'as farming' or 'as politics'. This would not necessarily be because the concepts 'farming' and 'politics' were unclear in the sense that we were often uncertain when people were farming or engaging in politics and when they were not; for we might use quite simple criteria to judge this, e.g. whether a man owns or works on something which the Ministry of Agriculture designates as a farm, or whether he is in Parliament, a party agent or local candidate, and so forth—that is, criteria not conceptually connected with the ends, aims or purposes of the activity. Nor, again, would it necessarily be because there was nothing which certainly counted, or because there was nothing which certainly did not count, as attaining whatever objectives did happen to be built into 'farming' and 'politics'. The position might be that there was, so to speak, a hard core of objectives attached to the concept, and a very blurred outer area. We might be certain that growing food and breeding cattle counted, but uncertain whether to count aesthetic or structural improvements to the estate: sure about voting and canvassing, but unsure about making speeches in Hyde Park or writing books on equality.

Is 'education' in this respect parallel to 'farming' and 'politics'? Note first that this is quite independent of the question which we left unresolved earlier—the question of whether to say that anything which is to count as education must (conceptually) be justifiable. For even if we say this, we do not commit ourselves to any particular *kind* of justification. It is one thing to say that education must (conceptually) be justifiable: and another thing to say that it must (conceptually) be justifiable in a certain mode, or according to certain very specific and circumscribed ends (in the way that therapy and business are).

It seems clear that there is a 'hard core' of criteria built into 'education', in the sense that we know (as with 'farming' and 'politics' and indeed any concept which has any sort of definitive or 'normal' meaning) that some things certainly fall within the concept and some

other things certainly fall outside it. Teaching a person to read and write is certainly education: killing him is certainly not. But it is equally clear that there is a large no-man's-land. In some (liberal) social groups, 'education' is sharply distinguished from 'indoctrination' and 'training': but there are other groups whose members may sometimes use this distinction and sometimes not, and there could be (perhaps there are) languages and cultures where this distinction is simply not marked at all. It may also be the case that whether to count X as Y will rest on some kind of *decision*: and here we have to remember that particular decisions turn on particular contexts and purposes. Reasons for allowing or disallowing an overlap between 'education' and 'therapy' may be administrative, political or moral: they do not always have to be 'philosophical' reasons.

Indeed, it is not wholly clear what a 'philosophical' reason would look like. Philosophy is sometimes 'as much a matter of making clear distinctions as of making already existing distinctions clear';<sup>4</sup> and of course it is quite possible to make a *great number of* (perfectly valid and useful) distinctions without these distinctions necessarily reflecting normal usage. They are distinctions of concept, not of common use, and none the worse for that. But the temptation is then to thin down a word in common use, so that it now excludes applications which it normally has, and talk as if this thinned-down sense were (in some quite mysterious way) the only 'right' one. Thus of course 1. teaching a person about his own feelings with the result that some mental malfunction is cleared up, and 2. teaching him in this way with the result only that he becomes more aware and has a fuller life, are different: of course this difference has to be marked somehow: and of course we can mark it by reserving 'education' for 2. only, and calling 1. 'therapy'. But if this reservation is not common usage, we give ourselves away as verbal monopolists.

It seems to me that there is, in fact, at least one class of important reasons for allowing an overlap in this case: roughly, because (as we shall shortly see) the similarities in the overlap area are important similarities. If this is so, then the case we are making out for 'mental health' as 'an aim of education' may be summarized thus:

Education involves initiation into activities, forms of thought, etc. which conceptually must be, or may in fact be, worth while or justifiable. Different types of justifications, or different descriptions of the mode in which they are worth while, may apply to different activities or groups of activities. Thus some may be called 'therapeutic', others described as 'enlarging consciousness', others again as 'developing the personality': and perhaps, on a normal-usage view of 'education', we shall also

allow extrinsic, means-ends justifications, such as 'contributing to survival', 'fitting people for jobs' and so forth. These justification phrases may be said to represent 'aims of education'; and 'therapeutic', or 'contributing to mental health', may represent one such aim.'

In that overlap area which we have vaguely described as mental health in the mode of irrationality, what sort of ways are there in which an individual may fail (display 'mental illness' or irrationality), which might or must be dealt with educationally? This is an enormous topic, but it is perhaps worth sketching three categories:

1. He may lack certain cognitive abilities (perhaps particularly the ability to identify his own or other people's feelings).
2. He may have these abilities, but fail to deploy them or bring them to bear on particular situations.
3. He may both have the abilities and deploy them, but still fail to feel and act appropriately to the situation.

Any of these types of failure, if sufficiently grave, may result in a person's feeling or acting with such wild inappropriateness that we could describe him as 'mentally ill'.

Much has been written in the past concerning the control of emotions already felt, and much also about inducing what authors, according to their moral views, regard as the 'right' emotions, either by allopathic (Plato) or homoeopathic (Aristotle) methods. It is not clear whether we should regard some of the practices advocated as 'education', 'training' or as some form of mental reinforcement or surgery. But there are, of course, behaviour patterns which can be intelligently learned, designed to increase a person's control over his emotions once he has them, or to prevent or encourage his actually having them. The educationalist, however, would be more encouraged by the conceptual connexion of emotion with belief. With reference to the first and second categories above, it is plain that teaching designed to increase cognitive awareness, and teacher-guided and intelligently applied practice in using such awareness in particular situations, can fairly be counted as educational.

The third category above, however, raises important and difficult questions. For it may seem to some that, once the educator has done all that he can to improve the cognitive abilities in a person, and helped him to bring these consciously to bear in his practical living—so that, in the ideal case, all the person's conscious beliefs when he faces a situation are true ('reality-orientated') ones—then the edu-

cator can do no more. This would suggest the conclusion that, if the person still fails to feel appropriately, there must be some physical cause: that we can no longer describe this as a case of irrationality: and therefore that, though it still comes under 'mental health' it no longer comes under 'education'. We now need (perhaps) the brain surgeon or the physiologist, not the teacher.

No one denies that there are many such cases, but we have, I believe, to distinguish them from another category of cases, the existence of which is logically possible, and which may be in practice very common. This is the class of cases which we could not correctly and sufficiently describe in some such terms as 'responding to conditioning', 'having one's anger triggered off by a stimulus', or 'behaving in conformity with an archetypal pattern laid down in childhood'. I have in mind those cases where some are apt to talk of 'unconscious emotions' and others of 'self-deception', '*mauvaise foi*', 'akrasia' or 'lack of sincerity'.

For example, one (very implausible) way of describing the Pharisees' condemnation of Jesus is to say that, whatever their conscious and professed motives and reasoning were (perhaps 'He is a blasphemer'), they were in fact driven by some pattern of responses, possibly set up ('learned' only in a thin sense of the word) in early childhood. Another quite different explanation is to say that they were unconsciously motivated, in the sense that they believed Jesus to challenge their authority, were frightened and wanted to have him killed, but that they *were not aware* of having this belief, emotion and want. What logically distinguishes this description from the former is that the method of verification is different. Thus, perhaps the Pharisees could be got to admit to this belief, emotion etc., in an unguarded moment: or perhaps we could observe them formulating the belief and then coming to forget (repress) it. Our observations here would be observations of the Pharisees as conceptualizing creatures, not (as in the former case) observations merely of stimulus-and-response patterns. Another way of giving what is in effect the same description is to talk of the Pharisees, at the time when they had got Jesus killed, as 'deceiving themselves', 'not being completely sincere', 'not having their heart in what they said', etc.

If some cases in the third category are of this kind, then we have here what is, from the logical point of view, only a special sub-class of the cases where irrationality is due to *false belief generating* inappropriate emotion: and from this it follows that the educator (rather than the brain surgeon) has a job to do. It is not only that the 'cure' or 'education' of such cases may take the form of teaching, but that it logically must. Admittedly, methods of treatment which do not involve increasing the individual's own perceptions and

reasoning—drugs, conditioning and the like—may be used to put him in a state in which he is capable of learning more readily: but there are, I believe, logical reasons for claiming that such methods can never be sufficient. For a 'cure' here involves the attaining of objectives describable in such terms as 'realizing X', 'appreciating Y' and 'understanding Z': and it is conceptually built into such terms that an individual can achieve them only by coming to grasp, freely and for himself (though with help), the relevance of certain conclusions. Notions like forcing, conditioning, etc. conceptually exclude this kind of process: and the idea of 'forcing someone to get on with his wife' seems as logically incoherent as 'forcing somebody to appreciate Shakespeare'. Force, conditioning, etc. may set the stage: but thereafter they must retire and allow education to enter.

Much more could be said in support of these very brief arguments, which indeed lie at the heart of much controversy in the field of mental health; I sketch them here only to show that the realm of the educator may be larger than some suppose. This has important practical consequences: for, whatever the logical similarities of these cases to more straightforward cases of false belief and inappropriate emotion, they are very different as empirical phenomena. Because of this, very different contexts of educational practice may be required to deal with them: contexts which perhaps are now recognized only under such titles, sinister to some, as 'group therapy' or 'psychoanalysis', and not as *educational* contexts at all. How important it may be for educators to devise such contexts will depend on how important this class of cases seems to be. For myself, I think it of the utmost importance: but I do not expect to be able to persuade others of this merely by adducing the names of Freud, Tolstoy, Sartre and others. This, unfortunately for some modern philosophers, is neither the sort of thing that can be demonstrated by conceptual analysis, nor the sort of thing that is capable of the kind of proof we find in the natural sciences.

## Notes

- 1 R. S. Peters, 'Mental health as an educational aim' in *Aims of Education*, ed. T. H. B. Hollins, Manchester University Press, 1964.
- 2 On this point see John Wilson, *Education and the Concept of Mental Health*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.
- 3 R. S. Peters, 'Education as initiation', in R. D. Archambault's collection *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.
- 4 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, O.U.P., 1962, p. 72.
- 5 See R. S. Peters, 'What is an educational process?', in *The Concept of Education*, ed. R. S. Peters, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, pp. 5-6.

# Happiness and education

6

R. F. Dearden

## Introduction

EARLY in life children learn that happiness is valued highly. Many of the first stories they hear have as their most satisfying conclusion that the main characters 'lived happily ever after'. Once children are at school, their parents may regularly enquire whether they are happy there, for to be happy is the main thing, even if academic progress is not quite all that it might be. At important choice-points in the course of formal education, happiness may again be appealed to as the ultimate criterion in making such choices. In fact, in discussing their child with the staff of a school parents often do explicitly say that all they want is that their child should be happy. For example, in a study of parental attitudes towards streaming, Brian Jackson comments on the parents of some C-stream children that 'if their child was worried and upset, this was in itself sufficient reason for not pressing a course which heightened anxiety: unlike the "A" parents, they had not the knowledge or experience in this matter to balance present pain against future pleasure, and ignoring the strategies of education, they thought in terms of their child's immediate happiness'.

But it is not only parents who think of education in terms of producing happiness. Educationists and the teachers themselves, especially at the primary stage, increasingly formulate their most favourable comments on a school in terms of the happiness of the children there. Indeed, such remarks are typical of the child-centred reaction against the elementary school tradition. G. H. Bantock somewhat caustically asserts that 'a supine acquiescence in the notion that happiness is the ultimate value has led us to underestimate the importance of achievement, even at a temporary loss of personal content. Child-centred education has been much imbued with the desire for happiness'.<sup>2</sup> Certainly this impression can be confirmed by looking at the Reports. For example, the Scottish Report of 1946 on primary education said that 'without discussing which are the happiest years, we may at least agree that every stage of life should be lived for its own sake as happily and

fully as possible. We must above all respect this right on behalf of children, whose happiness is a good deal at the mercy of circumstances and people beyond their control'.<sup>3</sup> Again, the Plowden Report comments, in its little chapter on aims, that phrases such as "happy atmosphere" . . . occurred again and again'.<sup>4</sup>

Implicit in these last remarks is a comparison with the schools of a century ago, or in some cases perhaps even of today or of only a decade or two ago, for typically such schools were sombre places in which laughter called for immediate investigation and the teachers scowled and frowned as an indication of their liverish displeasure with the young. But in our own more enlightened times, it is further implied, we are fortunately clearer that happiness is what the teacher ought to aim at and try continuously to realize, and certainly none of us would wish children to be unhappy, as if there were some special virtue in that, or would wish to see a return to or perpetuation of the more Dickensian school atmosphere of the past. Yet, for all that, we may still have residual doubts as to whether happiness is quite all that we are trying to achieve, especially in education. But are such doubts justified? If the matter were thought through to some conclusion, would one not have to admit happiness to be the ultimate value in appraising the success of education? Such questions can hardly hope to be answered without a prior scrutiny of what one *means* by 'happiness', and of the ethical implications of taking it as the ultimate value.

### What is happiness?

As soon as one attempts to pinpoint the concept of happiness a little more precisely, however, one is immediately struck by the vast and apparently indeterminate range of its application. Modes of life of such very diverse kinds may each be conceived of by those concerned as being happy ones. One man may find happiness in solitary pursuits and private pleasures, while for another all cannot be well if he is far from noisy company or confined to his own resources. Again, some see happiness to lie in material success of a very obvious kind, while for others it lies rather in contentment with the bare necessities or even in ascetic withdrawal from the world. According to Erich Fromm, a very common view of happiness nowadays is that it consists in 'the pleasure of unrestricted consumption, push-button power and laziness.'<sup>5</sup> According to G. R. Grice, for enormous numbers of people the recipe is: 'Marry a pretty girl who can cook; have some children; do a job—it is not critically important what job—as well as the next man; earn as much as I can; own my own house and car; engage in recreations and



entertainments to taste; love my neighbour with some fraction of my enthusiasm for myself.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, one suspects that this very indeterminacy in range or application is partly what so widely commends the concept to the modern mind. For in a society which is obviously pluralist in regard to values, happiness can still provide a common point round which all can rally and to which all can publicly appeal. The vagueness of the concept is precisely its merit in this connexion.

Both teachers and parents can find common ground in their care for children's happiness, much as they can both agree to providing children with what they 'need'.<sup>7</sup> Divergencies are thus agreeably glossed over in an apparent unanimity and concord. But indeterminate as it may be, the concept of happiness nevertheless cannot be stretched to cover every possible mode of life, and this restriction invites an attempt to identify the criteria which account for it. This is not to search for any particular recipe for one's own personal happiness, but to try to elucidate what is meant when *anyone* meaningfully speaks of happiness, regardless of whether or not we approve of his choice, or would favour it for ourselves. It would be enough, for the moment, if at least we knew what was meant, without going on to judge its content.

Perhaps a useful beginning towards this end is to distinguish between some importantly different, though doubtless also inter-related, uses of the word.<sup>8</sup> For instance, there is the sense in which we say that we are 'happy about the arrangements', 'happy with the results', 'happy to accept the proposal' and so on. Here, we have some very specific object or state of affairs in mind and wish to indicate that it fits in with our purposes, suits us well or is otherwise agreeable to us. Just as such common locutions as 'I am afraid that . . .' and 'I am sorry to . . .' may become purely conventional forms of expression, suitable even for business correspondence, so too may 'I am happy with . . .' and other variants become purely conventional, in this first sense of 'happy'.

A second sense is that in which we speak of 'feeling happy'. Here we are apparently referring to a transitory though very agreeable mood in which we sometimes find ourselves. One of the quickest ways of capturing it is too obvious to need mentioning, though it is perhaps not without interest to note that we do often refer to the tipsy as 'feeling happy'. As a mood, this kind of happiness has no particular object. There may be nothing definite that we are happy about, and there will certainly be *nothing that justifies* us in feeling happy. There is just a glow of well-being, probably best explained physiologically.

But there is yet a third sense, in which we speak of 'being happy

in life'. This kind of happiness is an *end*: something which can be pursued, promoted, achieved, protected or lost. Evidently it is this that people have in mind when they mention happiness in connexion with education and crucial choices in life. This, then, is the sense which needs to be clarified for the purposes of the present argument, and the purposes of that argument will be taken as the criterion of relevance for determining which points are worth making, and how far to go with 'clarification'. One could ask all sorts of questions here, such as how happiness is like or different from gladness, contentment, peace of mind, or rejoicing, whether animals can be happy and so on, but an unharnessed proliferation of conceptual points would do little to advance the argument. The present discussion will therefore confine itself to making two main points and to elaborating on each of them a little.

First of all, 'being happy', in the sense that we are considering, is a state of mind. It is a state and not an activity or a performance,<sup>9</sup> for happiness can neither be engaged in, as can running, smoking, listening to music or machining crankshafts, nor can it be commanded of us nor laid upon us as any kind of duty. We may, of course, say that a man 'ought' to be happy, but this means only that in our view he has every reason to be so, not that it is incumbent on him to be so. Again, as a state, happiness lasts for a time, but it does not take time, whether time to engage in or time to carry out. The period for which it lasts may be very variable—for instance childhood, since getting married, the few years after the war—and need not be the whole of life, as was implied in the old saying 'call no man happy till he is dead'. As a state of mind, happiness has an object. This is not just a longer or shorter period of time, but the relevant set of circumstances in which we stand during that period. The 'relevant' set of circumstances will be determined by the implicit or explicit picture which we have of how we wish our life to be, and a condition of our happiness will be a match between the perceived reality of our life and this picture.

The second point, following Von Wright,<sup>10</sup> is that happiness is a *hedonic* concept. We can begin to see this by asking how happiness is to be distinguished from other states of mind which have the perceived circumstances of a period in our life as their object—for instance such states as misery, depression or general anxiety. Although a happy life, or period of life, is not necessarily a life of nothing but pleasures, nevertheless it is a life which pleases us. Surely Mill was at least facing in the right direction when he defined happiness as 'pleasure, and the absence of pain'?<sup>11</sup> We are not happy unless we like our life as it is, or find it on the whole agreeable, nor can we teach children to recognize happiness in others before they have

learned what pleases others and when they are being pleased by it (beaming, tongue sticking out, humming, engrossment, absence of complaining or irritation, etc.). Nevertheless, the hedonic character of happiness has sometimes been questioned, perhaps through equating it with Greek terms which do not exactly correspond to it. Some further argument is therefore needed to show that happiness is indeed a hedonic concept.

Some pointers toward this conclusion have already appeared in earlier parts of this chapter. For instance, in discussing the modern appeal to happiness in education it was very natural to compare a Dickensian régime with one in which children took obvious pleasure in much of what they did. Again, one observes how naturally Erich Fromm, in the definition of happiness quoted earlier, began by mentioning pleasure. 'Feeling happy' is obviously a pleasurable state, and doubtless it is this which relates it to 'being happy in life'. It was mentioned how teaching children to recognize happiness in others depends on their learning to recognize when others are pleased. But there are, in addition to these pointers, some further considerations which deserve to be mentioned.

It has been pointed out recently by several philosophers<sup>12</sup> that if we understand what pleasure is, then we must see in the fact that something would give us pleasure a reason for wanting it. This is not to say, of course, that such a fact always furnishes us with a sufficient, or overriding, reason for action, but only that it does furnish us with a reason. If I learn that water-skiing would give me pleasure in various ways, then I must agree that I have been given a reason to go water-skiing, though of course the cost, danger, difficulty of access and requirement of skill may override this hedonic consideration. Thus there is no logical space, outside some special or unusual background context, for the question 'why seek pleasure?' Now if happiness is a hedonic concept, then the same point should be true of it; and if this is so, then it will at least provide some confirmation, though not of course proof, for our contention.

Now surely it is the case that a man cannot be said to have understood what happiness is if he does not see in the fact that something would promote or contribute to his happiness a reason for action. Whether it is a sufficient reason is one of the central questions of this chapter, but it can hardly be denied that it is at least a reason. There is no more logical space for the question 'why seek happiness?' than there is for the question 'why seek pleasure?' To have understood what pleasure and happiness are is at least to have seen that we cannot be called upon to justify the pursuit of them, other things being equal. Indeed, as Aristotle pointed out, happiness is a 'final end' in the much stronger sense that it is chosen not just for its own

sake but for its own sake *alone*. Other final ends, such as knowledge and friendship, may be chosen for their use in the pursuit of something further, as well as for their own sakes, but this is not true of happiness. There may be things that we do better as a result of being happy, but we are not happy *in order that* they may be done better. When Kant says that we have an 'indirect duty' to be happy, so that we shall be less tempted into transgressions of the moral law, it is a limited notion of the pacification of animal desire which he has in mind, not happiness as being pleased with one's life and circumstances for their correspondence with our picture of how they ought to be.

Next, if happiness is indeed a hedonic concept, then we should expect to find great variations in people's conception of happiness, since notoriously what gives pleasure to one man may be a matter of indifference, or even of pain, to another. That there is this degree of variation is obviously the case, as was indicated at the beginning of this chapter. Again, if happiness is hedonic, then there should be a limit set to this range of variation by whatever is inimical to being pleased with our lives, and this again is so. For instance, happiness excludes being constantly mindful of baffled hopes and other sources of regret in the past. It excludes sorrows and frustrations in the present and worries and anxieties about the future, all of which are necessarily unpleasant. In passing, we might note that the foundation of much that may spoil our happiness is to be found in our time-consciousness. For this reason, no doubt, it is children whom we think of as pre-eminently happy, since developed time-concepts are precisely something which they lack. Of course, happiness is compatible with a certain amount of unfulfilled hope, frustration and worry, but not if these concern matters of central importance in our lives. Even so, it will not be in respect of these features that we are happy. But if we were to view unsucccess under the aspect of the comic, or contrive a certain discontent as a goad to activity, then that would be another matter.

One final consideration: happiness is often something that is *wished for* and the ruling principle of our wishes, Freud taught, is the pleasure principle. Whereas wanting implies some notion of means, and a readiness to act if suitable means should be to hand, wishing implies no such realism, though this is not to deny that happiness may also be wanted and actively pursued.

But if, then, happiness is indeed a hedonic concept, that is not to say that it can simply be equated with pleasure as another name for exactly the same thing. For happiness has as its object our life and circumstances for some specifiable period, these being found to match our view of how we would wish our life to be. But pleasure,

by contrast, can be taken in particular bodily sensations, and such reliable non-cognitive pleasure may even be sought by us as a diversion or escape precisely when we are *unhappy*. Even cognitive pleasures, that is to say pleasures which, like happiness, are dependent on thoughts and beliefs, may be too particular or too unrelated to our central desires to justify speaking of happiness. Such cognitive pleasures include the pleasure we take in a view on a *journey*, or pleasure in hearing of some benefit or success that has come to another. Though happiness is a hedonic concept, then, it cannot simply be equated with pleasure over the whole range of that concept.

### **The value of happiness**

In attempting to evaluate happiness as an aim, whether in education or in life, one has to distinguish difficulties in its pursuit from criticisms of pursuing it. To begin with, there might be mentioned some obvious difficulties. For example, any man who is not just ignorant of the range of possible human activities open to him will have many desires which cannot together be realized. Many things which would afford him great satisfaction must therefore be *for-gone*, or be no more than dabbled in. Choice is necessary and desirable alternatives have to be rejected, much to our regret. We would like to read more novels, do more sightseeing, hear more concerts, engage in more sports, spend more time talking with friends and so on, but these activities are not all compossible and choices, regretfully, have to be made. According to Spinoza,<sup>13</sup> a rational man will not regret or be pained by what he sees to be necessary, but in that case it must be doubtful whether any fully rational men exist at all, and the problem still remains.

A second difficulty in the pursuit of happiness is its vulnerability to circumstances not fully under our control. Indeed, this vulnerability is indicated even in the etymological connexion of happiness with 'hap', and hence with fortune, chance, luck. On most modern views, at least good health and a sufficient source of income are necessary conditions of happiness. Yet both of these things are vulnerable to circumstances outside our control, as the abundant forms and extent of the insurance business indicate. Again, on most views certain intimate personal relationships are an important part of happiness. Yet people change, have accidents and eventually die, *there being no precaution against mortality*.

Of course, there is a long tradition of asceticism, going back to the Stoics and earlier, which attempts to overcome these difficulties by curtailing desires which depend in any way on chance for their

fulfilment and by withdrawing from all social commitments. This is the Stoic ideal of 'apathy', or making oneself dead to external things. Instead, there is an attempt to construct a self-sufficient and invulnerable inner citadel of the soul. But such a solution, if solution it be, would scarcely find much support nowadays. Such withdrawal is more likely to be seen, and truly seen, as an escape based on weakness and defended by what are only rationalizations. Modern life is safer, more predictable and more open to choice, at least at the level of private action, than in the time of the Stoics. And simply to curtail desires and to leave powers unused when some good could have been achieved by them, or to desire to curtail desire, is, if not a contradiction, then at least a broken-backed view of happiness.

A third difficulty that might finally be mentioned was particularly stressed by Schopenhauer.<sup>14</sup> According to Schopenhauer's analysis of the human condition, our nature is constantly to strive after some goal which, when attained, invariably turns out only to have been delusory in its promise of satisfaction. 'The goal was only apparent; possession takes away its charm.' Thus attainment is always only the starting point of some fresh striving and we can only oscillate between the pain of lacking what we want and the boredom of having it. Even with the casting off of external burdens there could come into prominence only the problem of being a burden to oneself. Yet, in his pessimism, perhaps Schopenhauer insufficiently allowed here for variations in temperament, just as the Stoics insufficiently allowed for variations in social circumstance.

Even if these various difficulties were set apart, however, there would remain to be considered some important criticisms of the pursuit of happiness, unless that pursuit is heavily qualified in a number of ways. The ground for the first and most obvious of these criticisms is provided by ordinary social morality. For a man's own personal happiness might be built on a complete disregard for and even exploitation of others, and might be kept intact only by callous insensitivity to human suffering. In *The Fall*, one of Camus's characters asks:

And why should I change, since I have found the happiness that suits me? I have accepted duplicity instead of being upset about it. On the contrary, I have settled into it and found there the comfort I was looking for throughout life.

Even if happiness is difficult to maintain in the face of suffering, and one cannot stamp out all compassion from one's nature, still there is an easy art of ensuring that one remains in undisturbed ignorance. Socrates seems to have thought that an unjust man could not really

## *Happiness and education*

be happy, but this is scarcely convincing. Socrates' indignation is all the less convincing, since he pictures the egoist as a sprawling and uncontrolled proliferation of every importunate impulse and eager desire. But an egoist can be much shrewder than that in his desires. Indeed, he may even have read and profited from Plato's *Gorgias* and *Republic* himself.

Above the level of moral obligation to others there are Professor Urmsen's 'saints and heroes'.<sup>15</sup> These are people whom we praise and admire for being prepared actually to sacrifice their own happiness, and even lives, for the good of others. Obvious examples would include a revolutionary's sacrifices for a political cause, a doctor's in ministering to isolated lepers, a daughter's in forgoing marriage for an invalid parent, a soldier's sacrifices for his comrades, Captain Oates walking out into the snow, the pilot of a crashing aircraft who remains in it to divert it from killing others, and so on. In another of Camus's novels, *The Plague*, Rambert, a journalist, refuses to escape from the plagued city and return to his mistress when he realizes his care and concern for those suffering from the plague. Camus shows us Rambert faced with the straight choice between his own personal happiness and rendering, at considerable risk to himself, what help he can to others who are suffering. Of course, a man may actually discover another kind of happiness in such sacrifices as these. But equally he may not, and in any case personal happiness could then only be a by-product and not the aim.

A possible reply to this is to point out that, admirable as these sacrifices may be, and certainly worthy of mention at some point in any liberal education, nevertheless we do not have a duty to be a saint or hero. These are works of supererogation, and while a man may indeed be praised for them yet he cannot really be blamed for omitting them himself. Furthermore, where is the value in the sacrifice of my happiness for others unless it is for their happiness? A man is certainly not a fool to surrender his happiness for that of others, but perhaps he would be if in fact the happiness of others were in no way to be advanced by his sacrifice.

Yet even if this reply were accepted, and not everyone would accept it, still it would not touch the man whose happiness is built on injustice or inconsiderateness towards others in matters of ordinary social morality. Utilitarians such as Hume, Bentham and Mill have therefore been careful to point out that it is the *general* happiness, or happiness considered from a *general* point of view, which in their opinion furnishes the standard of morality. Thus to happiness as a 'final end' must be added at least the distributive principle of fairness, impartiality or justice. Any further attempts to reduce these

two principles to just one, such perhaps as 'love', would be widely agreed to have failed. Nevertheless, this admission might draw the comment that a certain priority over justice must still be conceded to happiness, contrary to what Kant seems to have thought.<sup>16</sup> For a world in which men pursued happiness but in which there was no point in talk about justice is conceivable, as Hume saw. Men might never be in conflict with one another because of the abundance of everything that they might have been called upon to share, or because they shared beliefs which taught them to curtail their desires and to cultivate inner peace and tranquillity. Justice, on the other hand, is parasitic on there being something to be just about, if talk about it is to have any point. Happiness does, therefore, have a certain priority over justice.

A second ground for criticism of the pursuit of happiness, further to the criticisms deriving from morality and from certain moral ideals, is the ground provided by the Kantian notion of an individual dignity to be founded on integrity, independence and autonomy in the direction of one's affairs. For people may be happy, though they are slaves, beneficiaries of paternalism, wives living like Ibsen's Nora in 'a doll's house', and are thus generally relieved of all serious choice and responsibility. There is no reason to suppose that men naturally yearn for autonomy if they have always been denied it, or have been taught from birth never to regard it as a possibility of their own. There are, too, cases where people achieve a kind of happiness by regression from personal choice and responsibility, for instance by submission to a leader or mass movement.<sup>17</sup> A conception of happiness might therefore be criticized for being lacking in respect for autonomy, as well as for being immoral in respect of basic obligations to others.

Yet a third ground of criticism of some conceptions of happiness could be found in the two sets of values particularly stressed by G. E. Moore in his *Principia Ethica*: the various forms of friendship, and aesthetic enjoyment. For a man might be happy though he never entered into any kind of intimate personal relationship, and though he lived in surroundings of appalling ugliness. Again, the arts offer an ideal, pursuit of which may once more involve the sacrifice of personal happiness. Obvious examples of this would be Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Strindberg and Van Gogh, to mention only some that come first to mind. As G. R. Grice comments, 'happiness is altogether too tame a notion for the pursuits of those in the grip of an ideal, whether of service, truth or beauty'.<sup>18</sup> These too, however, are possible modes of life which ought to be mentioned in a liberal education.

A fourth ground from which one might criticize the pursuit of



happiness is that of the value of truth. For example, a man might say that he is happy, and try hard to convince himself of the truth of this, but in fact be self-deceived. What the lips assert is not always what the heart really feels. A man may strongly assert that he is happy, yet in fact be refusing to recognize that his marriage is a disappointment, or that his work is without the satisfaction he expected from it, or that his fundamental beliefs have crumbled. In this case, one part of his mind recognizes the truth of the matter, and he cannot really be said to be happy.

Again, a man's belief that he is happy might be founded, not on self-deception, but on a delusion as to his real circumstances. In such a case we seem to be pulled two ways in trying to decide whether he is happy or not. On the one hand, we are inclined to view happiness as relative to the perceived circumstances of a man's life, so that if he sees them as being what he would wish them to be, then he is happy. In other words, to think oneself to be happy is in fact to be happy. On the other hand, this is happiness in relation to a delusion or fantasy only, so how can it be 'real' happiness? The problem becomes acute in all those cases where someone is happy though deluded, and the question then arises as to whether the delusion should be revealed. There are, for example, fatally ill people who do not know the nature of their illness, and politically tranquillized groups who do not realize the extent of their exploitation. Should the doctor or the agitator disturb their happiness? Or consider Hjalmar Ekdal in Ibsen's *Wild Duck*. The centre of Ekdal's happiness is his darling 'daughter', yet she is in truth his wife's child by his former employer. Indeed, the play is an exploration of the clash which can occur between happiness and truth. Again, many have held the pursuit of truth to be an ideal to which their own personal happiness was properly to be sacrificed. 'Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied' Mill said, and many have implicitly agreed.

may indeed be happy and deluded, but in some situations his happiness will be short-lived, or less full than it might be, if he remains deluded, so that here at least he must value truth. But beyond that point, anyone who does in fact value the pursuit of truth as an ideal may, of course, find in that further grounds for criticism of a person's happiness.

In relation to the possibility of happiness and delusion, however, there are nevertheless limits to the conditions of life which we should find it *intelligible* for a man to call happy. Some circumstances and activities would simply produce incomprehension if they were asserted to be the foundation, or perhaps a constituent part, of a person's happiness. This is why we, like the ancients, are incredulous at the thought that a man might still be happy 'on the rack', for bodily pains are non-cognitive, and therefore we can in no sense *choose* whether to regard them as painful. It is not a matter of our different tastes, but of finding it impossible to *understand* how some things could be sources of happiness, or could not be destructive of it.<sup>21</sup> Consider, for example, the case of the old Spaniard in *The Plague*. At the age of fifty he retires from his drapery business to spend the rest of his life in bed, where he passes the time happily transferring dried peas, one at a time, from one saucepan to another. How could *any* man find happiness in an occupation as trivial as that? Such a life begins to be intelligible only when we come to see that this activity has for him a significance given to it by some rather eccentric religious views which he has about the 'halves' of life, and what is appropriate in each of them. Alternatively, if no such explanation were given, yet everything in the man's behaviour were to bear witness to a state of happiness, then we might have to account for it by attributing to him a suitably dwarfish mind, and we would mark the abnormality of his case by saying that he was happy *just* doing this, or by some other such emphatic qualification.

Against this whole line of criticism, however, it might be argued that the pursuit of such final ends as autonomy, truth and art can itself be subject to criticism. For such a pursuit may become fanatical, as it would do if it ceased to be an enhancement of human life and became destructive of it. Such fanaticism would be involved in an incoherence, for what could it now mean to call this a pursuit of *values* once sight has been lost of the fact that things can be valuable only *to* somebody, and not literally 'in themselves', or lodged in some Platonic heaven? But this, of course, is not to go back on the possible grounds for criticizing conceptions of happiness; it is only to say that those grounds in turn may themselves be subject to criticism. The sacrifice of one's happiness may well be justifiable, but only if there is some intelligible *point* in the sacrifice.<sup>22</sup>

Again, the various points so far made might be admitted, but it might be argued that the most satisfactory synthesis would be a *form of life in which happiness is itself found only on condition of pursuing the various other final ends that have been mentioned.* Thus a man could not be pleased with his life *unless he behaved morally, had respect for truth, valued aesthetic experience, and so on.* Many philosophers have taken something like this view, even though they may have arrived at it by different routes and emphasized different aspects of the resultant ideal. It closely corresponds, for example, to Aristotle's *eudaimonia*,<sup>23</sup> to Kant's 'highest good',<sup>24</sup> to Bradley's self-realization<sup>25</sup> and to Rashdall's ideal of a happiness constructed out of the best that we know.<sup>26</sup> John Stuart Mill presented a similar account<sup>27</sup> once he had admitted, even though somewhat inconsistently on his premises, there to be a *qualitative* as well as a quantitative dimension to the 'parts' which made up the 'concrete whole' of happiness. The same result is again to be found in Spinoza,<sup>28</sup> for whom happiness is not the reward of virtue but virtue itself. As all these philosophers would agree, such an ideal of happiness is to be achieved only by the modification of our nature which is progressively accomplished by education. Thus happiness, on these views, is not the only end, but rather the crowning perfection of a life devoted to the pursuit of good ends.

However, even this 'higher synthesis' of the two 'moments' still has its difficulties. As was pointed out earlier, the pursuit of happiness has certain strains and stresses internal to it, and this is certainly not less true of the heavily qualified ideal at which we have now arrived. First, there are the difficulties of choice raised by the old problem of the incommensurability of values. Not only do various uncontrollable contingencies force on us choices between happiness and knowledge, between personal happiness and the good of others, between devoting time to this pursuit rather than that, and so on, but we also find that there is no general criterion for making such choices: hence the existentialist flavour to the choice facing Rambert in the example from Camus's novel quoted earlier.

A second nest of difficulties springs from the fact that pursuit of the various values we have mentioned may itself militate against happiness, even without becoming fanatical. Greater moral sensitivity makes us more aware of the distress of others. Autonomy makes us more aware of responsibilities difficult to discharge because of our always inadequate knowledge. Intimate personal relationships necessarily expose us to the distress of facing the death of those whom we love. Art conflicts with morality, as one sees wherever the issue of censorship is felt to deserve consideration. Yet we cannot go back on these values. 'No intelligent human being,' Mill pointed out,

'would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs.'<sup>29</sup> As Dr Kenny recently chose to express it: 'Thus in the pursuit of happiness, no less than in the creation of a world, there lurks a problem of evil.'<sup>30</sup>

The problems raised by any attempt to harmonize happiness with the various values which we have discussed are thus not quite what at first sight they might have seemed to be. In our introductory section, it might have seemed that the issue was whether children should have happiness now, or later: whether education should seek to foster happiness now, or whether it should be regarded as a not always pleasant medicine to be borne now for the benefit of happiness later. But now the problem has turned out not to be, or not just to be, one of now-or-later. Education is concerned with other values beside happiness, and it is far from clear that they can ever be harmonized, either now or later. In educating, we may therefore be making impossible anything much in the way of happiness, but rather be sowing the seeds of inevitable discontents.

No doubt realization of these difficulties in the pursuit of a worthy form of happiness has been a prime motivation in the projection of a heavenly bliss to come, when the uncontrollable contingencies of this life will have lost their power and time will have given way to eternity. But quite apart from the huge difficulties involved in even making *intelligible* such a heavenly mode of existence, even an eternity could not resolve some of the strains internal to the pursuit of an ideal just described. If values are incommensurable, then they are, in this world or in any other. Shuffling off the problem with some apologetic mumblings about 'things being possible that we do not understand' can be seen only as evasion.

According to Sir Isaiah Berlin,<sup>31</sup> the belief that all human values can be harmonized, the belief that there is a 'final solution' which could be the basis for a political programme, has more than any other belief, been responsible for the slaughter of individuals. In Berlin's view, with which our own discussion is in line, the principal justification for liberty, conceived of as non-interference with people's choices of how to live, is that this 'recognises the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another'. Thus equality conflicts with liberty, the claims of genius with those of society, generosity with justice, and so on; and a final harmony to aim at would seem to be a chimera.

## **Happiness and education**

Let us now try to make explicit some of the possible implications for education of the preceding discussion. The first point worth making is that there is no question of whether or not happiness is valuable. It was argued earlier that a necessary condition for being said to have understood the concept is that one sees at least a reason for pursuing something in the fact that it would be for one's happiness. The question is rather that of how important happiness is, compared with other values, in a specifically educational situation, since the main conclusion of the preceding section was that there *are* other values and that they cannot always be harmonized with happiness.

An argument that might be advanced at this point in favour of giving special priority to happiness is that happiness is necessary for effective learning to take place. Children who are unhappy will not learn other things of value, it might be said. Something like this view would seem to be behind the modern tendency always to smile, always to praise, always to be permissive and to avoid insisting on relevant standards if to do so might involve unpleasantness or conflict. Such a view might understandably see itself as in justifiable reaction against the more brutal and insensitive methods of teaching often practised in the past, methods which may have produced a temporary facility in remembering information and retaining skills, but which ultimately alienated most children from the whole enterprise of education.

denied if the situation is indeed an educational and not a therapeutic one.

Furthermore, to begin from the view that happiness is the aim would be to accept children as they are, with their natures and correlative satisfactions as so far formed. Education could then be conceived as no more than instrumental in procuring the abilities and circumstances that would please that nature. This in turn would be to accept as definitive the social influences on children which have been formative up to that point. No doubt some, perhaps occasionally many, of those influences will stand scrutiny, but only rarely if ever will all of them. An educational agency, whether that of the school or not, has a constant task of *selection* among the influences brought to bear, or permitted to bear, on children's development. Indeed, what is to count as their 'development' can be determined only by implicit or explicit reference to some normative picture of an ethically desirable nature. Such a picture will contain other values in addition to that of happiness, values which may require not just the satisfaction but the gradual transformation of existing nature. The weakness of the view that one ought to satisfy only existing nature is seen in Huxley's *Brave New World*, where warts have themselves been 'adjusted' to the means available to satisfy them.

One further point deserves mention by way of conclusion. It might seem that the exclusive pre-eminence of happiness might be justified by pointing to the problem raised by the incommensurability of values. For if there is no general criterion of choice or priority-ranking among final ends, then *a fortiori* one cannot make such a choice on behalf of others, children for example. They must therefore be allowed to choose for themselves as seems best to them, and not be directed by neo-Platonists or neo-Aristotelians into some prejudged view of the good life. Yet bringing in this argument turns out to have been the admission of a wooden horse, in the following way.

'Children must gradually choose for themselves their own conception of the good life and hence of happiness.' This much may be granted; but now what is choice? Surely it is not just an uninformed and impulsive plumping where such a serious issue is involved? Choice implies not only that there be real alternatives open to us, but that we know what they are and that we have a range of criteria by which to judge them. In the present context, this means that a liberally conceived education is itself a condition of being able to exercise choice. Furthermore, on what grounds can the various final ends earlier mentioned now be excluded as possible criteria of choice of which one should be cognizant? On what grounds can morality, autonomy, knowledge and the arts, together with the

various standards and ideals constitutive of them, be subordinated to present happiness without prejudging the issue in a way which the initial argument itself set out to condemn? Thus we return to the point with which this section began, namely that the aim of education cannot simply be happiness quite without qualification. In education, as in life, there is a number of final ends constitutive of the good of man, and on some occasions we may judge some of them properly and rightly to overrule personal happiness, even if for a time the result is that we are less pleased with ourselves or with our lives.

## Notes

- 1 B. Jackson, *Streaming*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 92.
- 2 G. H. Bantock, *Education, Culture and the Emotions*, Faber & Faber, 1967, p. 139.
- 3 Advisory Council on Education in Scotland, *Primary Education*, H.M.S.O., 1946, para. 24.
- 4 Central Advisory Council for Education (England), *Children and their Primary Schools*, H.M.S.O., 1967, para. 497.
- 5 E. Fromm, *The Sane Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956, p. 201.
- 6 G. R. Grice, *The Grounds of Moral Judgement*, C.U.P., 1967, p. 165.
- 7 I have discussed the indeterminacy of 'need' in my article "'Needs' in Education", *Br. J. Educ. Studies*, xiv, no. 3, 1966, 5-17.
- 8 These distinctions are more fully explored in R. Montague's article 'Happiness', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, lxvii, pp. 87-102.
- 9 I take this convenient division from A. Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, ch. 8.
- 10 G. H. von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 87.
- 11 J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2.
- 12 E.g. A. C. MacIntyre, 'Pleasure as a reason for action', *Monist*, 1965.
- 13 Spinoza, *Ethics*, pt 5, prop. vi, note and prop. xviii, note.
- 14 Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. 1, sects 56 and 57.
- 15 J. O. Urmson, 'Saints and heroes', in *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. A. I. Melden, University of Washington Press, 1958.
- 16 Though not Plato (cf. *Republic*, 506a).
- 17 E. Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1942.
- 18 G. R. Grice, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- 19 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, first article, sects 1-5.
- 20 Eccles. I:18.
- 21 Miss Anscombe makes similar points about pleasure in her book *Intention*, Blackwell, 1957, para. 38.
- 22 For a psychological explanation of destructive 'ideals', see E. Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, ch. 3.
- 23 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bks 1 and 10.
- 24 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, bk 2, ch. 2.

- 25 F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, O.U.P., 1876, essays 2, 5 and 6.
- 26 H. Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, O.U.P., 1907, bk 2, ch. 2.
- 27 J. S. Mill, op. cit., ch. 2.
- 28 Spinoza, op. cit., pt 5, prop. xlii.
- 29 J. S. Mill, op. cit., ch. 2.
- 30 A. Kenny, 'Happiness', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, lxvi, p. 102.
- 31 Sir Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, O.U.P., 1958, sect. viii.
- 32 L. Hudson, *Contrary Imaginations*, Methuen, 1966, p. 114.



# Socialization and education

7

P. A. White

THAT education is socialization cannot be refuted and only a barbarian or a philistine would attempt to do so. But this is not to say that all those who assert that the school is a socializing agency, that the teacher should be a socializer or a resocializer and so on, are necessarily right. For the word 'socialization' is often employed merely to give an argument a semblance of irrefutability. I want to suggest that talk about 'socialization' constitutes a trap for the educator; it may lead him to adopt quite spurious aims, seemingly supported by an indubitable conceptual truth; or, in seeking to avoid these spurious aims, he may well neglect aims which no educator can afford to ignore.

Emile Durkheim's great insight was to see that in an important sense education *must* be socialization. For all education is centrally concerned with developing children's minds and this development is largely a social matter. It is a matter, as Oakeshott has said, of helping children to enter into their cultural inheritance, into the 'geistige Welt', which is a public world.<sup>1</sup>

Durkheim puts his claim very persuasively in elaborating his assertion that 'education consists of a methodical socialization of the young generation'.<sup>2</sup> This must be so, argues Durkheim, because human beings are not born human but made human by society. The job of transforming new-born infants into 'truly human beings', which any society must undertake, is the business of education and this cannot be simply a matter of developing inner capacities or potentialities. In this respect men are not like animals. The adult bird may, in some sense, teach its young how to fly and build nests but in so doing it is merely fostering innate instincts. Even without the adult's aid the bird would, in time, discover how to fly for itself. The education of men, however, adds something new to biological man.

Society finds itself, with each new generation, faced with a *tabula rasa*, very nearly, on which it must build anew. To the egoistic and asocial being that has just been born it must, as

rapidly as possible, add another, capable of leading a moral and social life. Such is the work of education, and you can readily see its great importance. It is not limited to developing the individual organism in the direction indicated by its nature, to elicit the hidden potentialities that need only be manifested. It creates in man a new being.<sup>3</sup>

This new being would never develop spontaneously from resources within the individual, even given millennia in which to do so, for even the most basic notions which govern our thought, e.g. notions of cause, law, space, number, body and so on, are not notions we are born with, as we are born with physical bodies, but are learnt from the social world into which we are born. More crucially still,<sup>4</sup>

In learning a language, we learn a whole system of ideas, distinguished and classified . . . and it is not necessary to demonstrate that language is, in the first degree, a social thing.

Durkheim's insight concerning the necessarily social nature of education must be opposed to any view which sees education as a matter of the growth of mind in some way analogous to physical growth, where the growth of concepts parallels the growth of cells. Against this view Durkheim reminds us that the staples of education—knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, habits, dispositions, etc.—are part of man's social heritage and cannot come from within the child. In this sense education must be socialization; it could not be anything else.

Though to have said this is to have said something of the first importance, it is not to have said all that must be said about education. Education is not socialization *tout court*. Anyone who asserted that it was would have to cope with a similar difficulty to that of the growth theorists, who in their stress on unimpeded growth fail to consider that educating someone necessarily involves making value judgments about the directions growth should take. Those suggesting that education is socialization—in the sense of introducing the child to the social world—face a different but analogous problem. They have, as it were, too much content. For if education is simply socialization, it will include the immoral and the trivial. But while the activities of forgery and playing cat's—cradle are part of the social world, we do not normally regard them as educational activities. To say this is to commit oneself to the view that education is concerned with the transmission of what is thought to be valuable, in some sense, in any society. This is certainly an

assumption in this discussion. A further related conceptual connexion, which will also be assumed here, but not argued, is that in a liberal democracy the capacities for rational thought and critical appraisal must be regarded as particularly valuable; therefore, in such a society, education must in large measure be concerned with developing these. Both of these assumptions are made with *formal* education in a liberal democracy in mind.

If, then, socialization is understood as the introduction of the child to the social world in general, this cannot be identified with education, which is concerned with introducing children to what is thought to be valuable, and, indeed, Durkheim himself certainly does not hold this somewhat crude view. He argues that educators select from the vast range of content provided by the social world according to two principles.

The first principle states that content must be selected which will inculcate in pupils those physical, intellectual and moral states which are necessarily demanded of all members of society regardless of the social category to which they belong. One must determine the general beliefs, attitudes, skills, etc. necessary to the existence of society and these will form the common element of education, which all children will receive.

Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands.<sup>5</sup>

The second principle provides for diversity in education, for educators must also be concerned to develop in each child the physical, intellectual and moral states required of him by 'the special milieu for which he is specifically destined'.<sup>6</sup> Even in casteless and classless societies children will still need to be differently prepared for different occupations.

Durkheim is not prepared to say, then, that education is socialization *tout court*, but that education is an introduction to *certain* social facts, values, etc. which have been selected according to the two principles he cites. What is not clear is why educators should adopt these principles to determine that part of socialization which is education. At some points it sounds as if Durkheim's two principles are the principles which he thought were employed by actual educators.<sup>7</sup> But these naturalistic grounds are no grounds at all for saying that these principles *should* be employed. Alternatively, Durkheim may be arguing that the concept of a society cannot properly be applied to any group which has not adopted these principles.<sup>8</sup> But, as he himself says, prehistoric societies may well

have existed which did not employ his second principle,<sup>9</sup> so this principle at least does not seem necessary to the existence of any society. However, if the general beliefs, attitudes, etc. falling under the first principle are logical and moral rules of such a high order of generality (e.g. the law of non-contradiction and the principle of truth-telling) that nothing which we would call a 'society' would continue to exist without their transmission, these would be a necessary feature of any society. In this sense, the first principle would pick out valuable attitudes, beliefs, etc. which would have a place in any education.

But it is not clear that Durkheim is concerned with what is necessary to maintain *any* society but perhaps rather with what is needed to support a particular kind of society. Very generally, this would be a society where people shared certain common values, attitudes, beliefs about the world, etc., and where in other respects their values, attitudes and the skills they employed were different from those of their fellows. But this very formal account can be given different content and until this is done it is not clear whether initiation into such a society could count as education by liberal-democratic standards or not. For instance, the kind of society Plato depicts in *The Republic* would certainly demand initiation into common values as well as into a certain social position, demanding particular skills, habits and so on. But such an education, for all but the Guardians, might well be regarded as somewhat inadequate in a liberal democracy. Alternatively, this formal framework of initiation into general values and some individualized way of life could be compatible with the kind of social arrangements characteristic of liberal democracies, since it allows for the acceptance of certain basic principles and, over and above these, that people should pursue ideals as diverse as they please. The fact that Durkheim's principles are compatible with such radically different social arrangements may account, to some extent, for the differences among his commentators as to how he is to be interpreted—whether as a defender of a rigidly stratified society or as one concerned with the necessary conditions for the growth of individualism. Arriving at a reliable judgment as to where Durkheim stands, and what interpretations of these highly abstract principles would have been acceptable to him, is made more difficult by two obstacles internal to his work. First, it seems likely that Durkheim's views underwent a shift in favour of autonomy and so, in this sense, it is wrong to look for a Durkheimian view on this.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, in *Moral Education*, where one might expect some conclusive evidence on the place Durkheim assigns to autonomy, the final section on the *development* of autonomy is missing. Opinion on Durkheim's views therefore must remain

somewhat speculative, and since I am not concerned here primarily with Durkheimian exegesis and interpretation for its own sake, there is little point in pursuing these speculations. But to have gone this far and seen the crucial ambiguities in Durkheim's work—i.e. as to whether he is concerned with beliefs and attitudes which logically must be held if *any* society is to continue in existence or whether with those which are necessary to a certain kind of society, which may or may not be desirable—is of some interest and importance; for these same ambiguities recur in contemporary discussions of socialization.

The question whether education is socialization is difficult enough, especially if it involves one in the intricacies of Durkheimian exegesis and assessment; but considering the suggestion, made in recent educational debate, that socialization *should be at least one aim of* education, involves one in a yet more bewildering welter of complexities.

The first problem arises in trying to determine what is meant here by socialization. One could start by classifying all uses of the word 'socialization', like a linguistic Linnaeus. In such a classification one would include presumably the use of the word in political contexts, where to socialize, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is 'to establish or develop according to the theories or principles of socialism'. But this is clearly not what people mean when they talk about socializing children. A similar example, closer to education, comes from the Gittins Report, where four stages of emotional and social development are distinguished, the third of which is called the 'socialization period'.<sup>11</sup> This is defined as the period from fifteen months to three years, when significant relationships within and outside the family are formed. But there is no question of aims of education here, at least not formal education which *is my concern here*. Similarly, we draw a blank if we turn to social scientists to illuminate the meaning of socialization as an aim of education, chiefly because social scientists are not concerned with putting forward aims and also because the word 'socialization' often has a precise technical definition within the particular context.<sup>12</sup> Therefore I shall refer only marginally to the literature of social science where it is particularly relevant to the problem of this discussion.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps examination of what socialization means should be confined to the use of the word in talk about *educational aims*. But here the snag is that one finds relatively few instances of the use of the word in relevant educational literature, possibly because the word 'socialization' has gone in and out of fashion in educational

circles. On the other hand, there seem to be a number of, as it were, perennial aims of education which this word *sometimes* labels, and which are sometimes referred to in other ways, e.g. 'making the child into a member of society', 'fostering the child's social development', 'getting the child to acquire social values,' 'giving the child social skills'. It is this puzzling area of 'social' aims of education rather than the use of the word 'socialization' which creates the interesting problems for the educator, although some of these problems may well be obscured by the currently fashionable use of the word. The rest of this discussion will largely be devoted to a critical examination of the very different possible 'social' aims of education.

The first step must be a rough delineation of what is meant by social aims or socialization in this sense, by indicating the contrast which is being drawn here. To socialize the child, in this sense, is to get him to acquire certain social skills, rules, attitudes and beliefs where this is seen as distinct from acquiring academic disciplines such as science, mathematics and history. This, it is clear, is a more restricted use of the term 'socialization' than Durkheim's. For Durkheim socializing a child includes introducing him to academic disciplines as well as social skills, values, attitudes and so on.

Before examining in detail the various social aims of education falling into this broad class, a further complexity in the modern usage of the term 'socialization' must be noted. Confusingly, 'socialization' is also applied to a certain *method* of learning. That is, it is claimed that whereas a child can be instructed in, i.e. explicitly taught, the academic disciplines, he must be 'socialized' into social attitudes, beliefs, values, etc. In modern usage, then, 'socialization' may refer to a particular content—social skills and attitudes (as distinct from academic ones)—or to the method necessary to get children to acquire these. What this method is, is not very clear except that it is to be understood negatively as not-instruction. If one wanted to describe it positively one might say that the argument that children must be socialized into social skills is the argument that these things can be 'picked up' only in the actual practical situation. They are 'caught rather than taught'. Interestingly enough, something of this sense of socialization, too, is found in Durkheim's *Moral Education*.<sup>14</sup> In the second part of that study where Durkheim is discussing how the 'elements of morality' are developed in the child, he suggests that the school environment, through the way in which its corporate life shapes the child's life, is a powerful method of moral education. 'Socialization' is also a popular term for political learning, presumably because most political attitudes and beliefs are picked up in an informal way in many societies.<sup>15</sup> How

far socialization, in this sense, is a logically possible method of achieving the social aims of education will be considered, where this is appropriate, as the different particular social aims of education are distinguished.

The different social aims of education can be divided into three groups. The first group is widest in scope.

The H.M.S.O. handbook on primary education regards the fostering of the child's social development as the encouraging of 'acceptable behaviour in personal and social matters, considerate regard for other people, all that is meant by a sense of responsibility, self-control and co-operation'.<sup>16</sup>

Blyth claims that one of the five roles which the primary school discharges is that of 'socialization', meaning by this something very general: learning to live with others 'in a manner appropriate to a civilised community'.<sup>17</sup> In a democratic society this is best promoted by group work.<sup>18</sup>

Warr<sup>19</sup> sees the process of 'normal social growth' as the problem for the child

of learning to live; learning to adjust himself so that he can grow to live happily and as a useful member of his own family, his group, his school, his neighbourhood, his country and of the world.

This learning, too, is to be fostered largely by encouraging the child to participate in group activities.<sup>20</sup>

These quotations suggest a common general aim: to get the child to behave acceptably, get on with other people, have regard for them and so on. In two cases the suggested method for realizing this aim is group work.

1. At first sight, it seems that what these writers mean by 'socialization' or 'fostering social development' is moral education. This seems to be a fairly common equation. It is found, for instance, in Kilpatrick's *Philosophy of Education*.<sup>21</sup> People can mean different things by 'moral education', of course, but if what is meant is that pupils should be brought to adopt the principles and rules governing interpersonal behaviour, which might be said to constitute a basic rational morality, this clearly must be an aim of education in a democracy. Several contemporary philosophers—and here there is a clear parallel with Durkheim—have demonstrated the necessity of certain moral principles for the existence of any society at all, principles like justice, consideration of interests and truth-telling,<sup>22</sup> and Hart and Strawson have gone further to indicate a certain minimum content which must inform the interpersonal rules of

any society given man's nature and his environment (e.g. rules about the distribution of goods, not injuring others, caring for the young, etc.).<sup>23</sup> Getting children committed to these rules and principles must be the concern of any educator since a necessary presupposition of *any* education is that some kind of human society should continue in existence.

2. It is not clear, though, that those writers who talk about 'socialization' and 'fostering social development' in this broad sense have this basic moral education in mind. The general impression given by some of the literature in this area is that in talking about 'socializing the child' and 'fostering normal social growth' these writers mean that the child should adapt himself to others and concern himself with their good in a totally self-forgetting way. Perhaps this impression is mistaken and they are not advocating a wholly altruistic morality but are simply stressing that a very important part of basic moral education is getting children to care about others. (This is especially likely to be the case with those writers who have the infant or primary school in mind, since this aspect of moral education must loom large at this stage.) But in so far as they are saying, or can be read as saying, that the aim of social education must be to get children to care exclusively for others in a totally self-forgetting way, this view must be rejected by any educator concerned to introduce children to a basic rational morality. One cannot, on rational grounds, insist that children should care *only* for others.

But, again to invoke a distinction made earlier in the discussion of Durkheim, it is thought desirable in a democratic society that children should not only be brought to act in accordance with basic morality; they should also be introduced to the greatest possible range of individual ideals;<sup>24</sup> and this is the place for altruism, with children exploring the implications of this ideal perhaps through examples of real and fictional altruists like St Francis, Schweitzer, Fanny in *Manfield Park* and so on.

An interesting parallel can be drawn with the contribution of growth theorists to moral education. If proponents of socialization in this sense have a tendency to overstress consideration of the interests of others, growth theorists tend to give undue weight to individualistic principles, expressed in such notions as self-realization.<sup>25</sup> Neither can be made the stuff of basic morality and insisted on; both should be exhibited in schools as possible ideals. Wagner must have his place alongside Florence Nightingale, Gauguin his alongside Gandhi; and those, in some ways more educative figures personally torn by both ideals, like Tolstoy and Goethe, must find a place too.



3. Another possibility is that, in talking about 'acceptable behaviour' and 'appropriate behaviour', what people have in mind is getting children to conform to what is acceptable in their particular society. It might be thought that the ideal of conformity has been destructively criticized too often already by writers like Riesman, Hoffer, Fromm and so on. But I do not think that it will ever quite die, and while it lives it should be frequently, though judiciously, belaboured. For the notion that children must be made to conform to the values of their society embodies a truth. In one sense this must be so, for it is only in the rules of some particular society that the rules and principles of a basic rationally-based morality can be found. They do not exist *in vacuo*. Equally, they get different application in different societies according to circumstances. All societies must have some rules about caring for the young, but in one society it will be the child's biological mother, in another its biological father and in a third a 'social' mother who cares for it. Therefore, the educator cannot avoid teaching children to conform to the rules of their society, in one sense, for he is committed to teaching the basic moral rules and therefore, necessarily, their particular application in his society.

But in allowing that education for conformity has a place in any society we must be careful not to open the door to certain anti-educational aims. We must, for instance, guard against children coming to think that anything which is in fact valued in any given society ought to be so valued, by developing in them a rationally critical stance towards what is highly regarded in their society. This is demanded by the value put on the development of men as rational beings in a democracy and by the commitment to the desirability of individual ideals. To support an education for conformity, for conformity's sake, is for a democratic society to allow itself to rot from within.

4. Socialization as a *method* of education (that is, in this case, not direct instruction of any kind but 'group work') must be considered, to see how far it is a logically possible method of moral education. Whether socialization could promote altruism or mindless behavioural conformity are further questions, which I shall not discuss, since the question of crucial educational importance is whether socialization as a method could accomplish the essential task of getting children on the inside of the basic moral rules.

What certainly seems clear is that plunging children into group activities is not sufficient to make them moral. Those who assume that in this way a child necessarily comes to care for others and respect them as persons and so on, are making a false assumption. Whether or not a child comes to do this will depend crucially on the

concepts available to him. This is a matter of *cognitive learning*, not of simply getting the child to engage in group activities. For there is no reason why the child engaging in group activities should not see fellow group members as deadly rivals or despised 'non-starters'. Good teachers, of course, know this and intervene in group activities, encouraging the child to see his fellows in a certain way. But this only underlines my point: group work is not sufficient for moral education, and for that matter neither is it necessary—although it may be the case that being a member of a small work-group gives the child an opportunity to act morally. But providing such opportunities for acting morally must be complemented by provision for appropriate conceptual development. What precisely 'appropriate conceptual development' is and how it is to be achieved are questions for research, but it will not be achieved simply by setting children to work or play in groups.

The social aims which form the second group are rather more specific in content. Here the aim of socialization is to get children to acquire the particular beliefs, values, attitudes and so on of a particular group.

Davies and Gibson<sup>26</sup>

take the maturity of the next generation for *their* society as the most useful way of conceptualising, the aim of the social education of the adolescent . . .

Their account of what social education should be for the adolescent is similar in some respects to certain sociological accounts, in which socialization is regarded as the process of acquiring a particular role, or number of roles, in a society. The views of Inkeles are representative here:<sup>27</sup>

the objective of socialization is to produce competent people, as competence is defined in any given society. It aims to develop a person who can take care of himself, support others, conceive and raise children, hunt boar or grow vegetables, vote, fill out an application form, drive an auto and what have you.

As Inkeles points out, 'the aspects of competence' he sketches in his paper 'are precisely those which one requires either to continue as part of, or attain to a position in, middle class America'.<sup>28</sup>

It is also argued that another social aim of education is to prepare people for their sex-roles and this is the rationale behind housecraft and baby-care classes for girls only.

One of the most important social aims, it is also claimed, is the

preparation of children for their work-roles. An extended example of this is provided by the Schools Council Working Paper No. 7, *Closer Links between Teachers and Industry and Commerce*, which describes a programme to prepare average children for industry, worked out by teachers taking part in various 'introduction to industry' schemes in 1965 and 1966.

Socialization, in this sense, is the preparation of the individual for membership of a particular society or social group. It is a rather vague aim which could mean at least three things.

1. 'Preparing children for membership of a certain social group' might mean moulding them into, for example, middle-class Americans, or women who see themselves predominantly as housewives and mothers, or people who see themselves as uniquely fitted for a certain band of occupations. This would involve getting them to master the beliefs, skills and habits appropriate to the given position in such a way that they never come to reflect on whether they should see themselves in this way and lead this life.

As a possible example of moulding let me take the account in the above Paper of the ways in which teachers thought schools should be modified to 'relate more closely the teaching during the last years at school to the practical needs of adult life'.<sup>29</sup> I am not suggesting that it is the intention of the authors of the Schools Council Working Paper to provide schools with a ready-made programme for moulding children into workers. Indeed, as I shall suggest below, their aim is very probably a far more educationally defensible one. Nevertheless, it seems to me that an implementation of the programme they advocate *could* lead to the moulding of children into factory workers, and therefore it seems justifiable to use it as an example. The Working Paper advocates the modifying of schools, as they exist in Great Britain at the moment, in three ways:

(a) First, 'the curriculum might be adjusted'.<sup>30</sup> In practical terms this might mean making room on the curriculum for the pupil to acquire an understanding of 'quite mundane and day-to-day considerations such as income tax, insurance, hire purchase, mortgage, how to use a bank and even how to use the telephone'.<sup>31</sup>

(b) Secondly, the school should pay more attention to the potential worker's personal values. The following qualities are noted as among those sought by employers: *common-sense, self-reliance, resourcefulness, ability to express oneself clearly and accurately, a capacity for mixing and co-operating with others, a sense of discipline, tact, obedience, loyalty and an awareness that each worker contributes to the well-being of the firm or*

enterprise as a whole. To give sufficient time to develop these qualities could mean some sacrifice of conventional curriculum subjects but this might not prove to be too much of a barrier. The Working Paper notes: 'Teachers were impressed by the fact that many employers were prepared to forgo high academic attainment in favour of well developed personal qualities.'<sup>12</sup>

(c) Thirdly, the writers of the Working Paper feel that a change in general school organization would facilitate the preparation of potential workers for the world of industry and commerce. They say:<sup>13</sup>

the acting out of some forms of industrial discipline or organisation in schools, involving ideas like job cards, progress chasers, time-setters, chargehands, office work (including time sheets, work sheets, pay slips) and even clocking-in were suggested. A Schools council which would have something in common with a works council was suggested as an alternative to the prefectorial system.

These suggestions for an educational programme, with a suitably adjusted curriculum, a set of values to be inculcated and even proposals for organizing the school itself on factory lines, might well convey the suggestion to sixteen-year-old leavers that they are fitted to fill a certain place in society, without their ever questioning this. In other words, these arrangements could have the effect of getting a child to see himself, unreflectingly, as uniquely fitted for a certain band of occupations by equipping him gradually with the appropriate beliefs, skills, habits, etc., for this position and not allowing him to reflect rationally on the desirability of these occupations in general and their suitability for him in particular. This point is a quite general one; the objective of education in a democracy cannot be to mould children, whether they are moulded into barristers, factory workers or middle-class Americans. To accept this objective is to accept a society of the Platonic type as an ideal, as has been outlined in the discussion of Durkheim's view of education. That ideal, whatever particular form it takes, is open to substantially the same objections as those made to the ideal of conformity in the previous section. In the first place such moulding allows no room for critical reflection on the social and economic arrangements of the society. (In this respect, we can see socialization at work as a *method* here. The objective is the moulded factory worker, doctor, publicity agent, etc., and the method that of inducting the child into the beliefs and skills attached to this position, as though it were in the natural course of things that he should adopt it.) In

the second place, such moulding does not allow for the choice of different ideals of life. Admittedly, there is a problem here. What is to be done when my individual ideal runs quite counter to the public interest? Without taking exotic examples of torturers and the like, this conflict can be seen in a situation where a society desperately needs engineers and where too many people have the ideal of being art historians. Clearly some decision must be reached here, and an urgent task for social philosophers interested in education must be to tease out the relevant from the irrelevant considerations affecting this decision; what is obvious, however, is that in a democracy this dilemma cannot be solved by what I have called moulding.

2. Secondly, 'preparing children for membership of a certain society or social group' can be interpreted as getting children to *understand* what is involved in being a middle-class American, a housewife or a factory worker and to critically appraise this.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the aim is to introduce children in a theoretical way to certain social and economic institutions of their society so that they come to have some understanding of these and are encouraged to appraise them critically, perhaps in some cases by comparing them with similar institutions in other societies. In this way one might get children to consider, for example, the nuclear as against the extended family, different concepts of sex-roles in different societies, liberal democracies as against benevolent dictatorships and so on. There is no question of the value of such investigations if children are to understand and appraise the particular application of the basic rules of morality in their society and to consider possible individual ideals. If educators fail to make provision for the growth of this kind of understanding, children will lack the knowledge relevant to some of the most crucial decisions they will, necessarily, be called upon to make: decisions about what occupation to follow, how to bring up their children, political decisions; about, for example, how the wealth of society should be distributed, in what areas of life government interference is justified, and so on.

3. Thirdly, 'preparing a child for membership of a certain society' might be a matter of giving him what are often referred to in this context as '*social skills*'. How far the teaching of '*social skills*' is necessary in a democracy depends, of course, on what one means by this vague phrase.

Sometimes what seems to be meant is '*moral skills*', although in a sense this is a paradoxical notion. There are no distinctively moral skills because a skill is a means to some end and therefore can always be used for immoral purposes. Nevertheless people who talk about '*moral skills*' often have something of importance in mind. They are concerned that those engaged in moral education should

not see their task as complete when the child has been taught, e.g. *that* he should apologize. This is not sufficient: he must be taught *how* to go about this. This will be a very complex business, depending a great deal on circumstances, and certainly it will not be a matter of a bit of once-and-for-all teaching. The teacher can probably most usefully influence his pupils' development by commenting, advising, suggesting and prompting, discretely, as concrete situations arise. But this is mere speculation; for the precise tasks involved in teaching people judgment in general have yet to be specified.<sup>35</sup>

But this is not the only, and perhaps not the most usual sense, of 'social skills'. Frequently when people talk of equipping the child, very often in this context the young school leaver, with social skills, what they have in mind is very much the complement to the theoretical understanding of society, discussed under 2. above. They are concerned that the child should not merely understand that such-and-such social arrangements exist in his society and have some notion of the rationale for them; he should also be taught *how* to use them and, if necessary, to get them changed. It is not sufficient for the child to know *that*, for example, certain social services are available; he needs to know *how*, for example, to get his sickness benefit or legal aid. The importance of this kind of learning cannot be disputed, although only detailed consideration of what is involved will enable one to judge what should be the responsibility of the school and what is more appropriately left to other agencies. For instance, perhaps in our society learning how to bath a baby can be safely left to the antenatal clinic. But again it would be foolish of me to be dogmatic here, when we lack even a principle on which to make such a division, quite apart from the facts needed to decide in any particular case.

But by 'social skills' people may mean something quite different, what, in fact, the little books of the how-to-win-friends-and-influence-people variety claim to teach you. This would be, I suppose, techniques for 'getting on with people'. In an educational context, where one is not concerned to give lessons in hypocrisy and various techniques of subterfuge and deceit, 'getting on with people' could mean two things. It might mean teaching people what it is to show kindness, respect for persons, sympathy and so on in particular contexts (this was discussed earlier under 'moral skills'), or, alternatively, it might mean teaching people how to form certain personal relationships. This brings us to the third set of social aims of education which is best discussed separately.

Here it might be said the general aim is to make the child into a sociable person or a 'good mixer'. The *Observer* seemed to have this

sense of socialization in mind when on 30 June 1968 it recommended a 'stretch towelling loose cut dress in sherbet yellow' for two- to five-year-olds as suitable 'for shopping, skipping and socialising'. This comment aptly introduces this set of social aims of education, one expression of which is found in Nisbet's book *Purpose in the Curriculum*. Nisbet distinguishes social development from five other kinds of development, namely physical, aesthetic, spiritual, intellectual and moral development, all of which together constitute 'personal growth'. For Nisbet<sup>36</sup> the aim of social development is the production of

people who *enjoy* the company of their fellows, who are genuinely interested in men and women and boys and girls, and who find real pleasure in associating with them, in groups large or small—people, in fact, who love their neighbours in a very direct way.

Later in this book Nisbet assesses the contribution of the various curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities to social development.

Let us take Nisbet's remarks at face value: could getting children to 'enjoy the company of their fellows' be an aim of education? First, it is important to see that this could be interpreted in at least two ways, either as simply enjoying being with other people—seeing and hearing other human beings around—or it could mean enjoying doing things with other people.

It is unlikely that anyone would advocate the first, i.e. the fostering of an appreciation of a kind of warm togetherness, as an aim of basic education, but if this were suggested as an ideal one could make clear to children the possible delights in this kind of experience. At the same time it would probably have a fairly low priority as an individual ideal to be exhibited, since, in western societies, the child would probably not need to have this pleasure of 'togetherness' pointed out in the formal educational system as he would have become aware of it at home or in the peer-group.

According to the second interpretation, getting children to 'enjoy the company of their fellows' is getting them to enjoy engaging in corporate activities together, such as dancing, singing in choirs, playing games and so on. This seems in fact to be Nisbet's idea and accounts for the large part he assigns to games and extra-curricular activities in promoting social development.

But it is not clear what would be involved in aiming at getting children to enjoy corporate pursuits. Perhaps a teacher with this in mind would try to get children to enjoy corporate activities somehow in general, in the abstract, in the hope that they would then choose

to engage in particular corporate activities. But this is surely impossible. One cannot get people to enjoy corporate pursuits just like that, because these pursuits always take some particular form. One can get people to enjoy choral singing, talking politics, playing cricket or building adventure playgrounds, but these are all particular corporate activities, and it is the particular features of these activities, over and above their corporate quality, which determine whether or not the individual opts for them. If one argues that it is possible to get children to enjoy corporate activities, in general, as it were, so that given a choice they elect to engage in corporate activities, regardless of whether the particular corporate activities are rowing, gossiping or dancing, then this does not involve a second, distinct sense of 'enjoying the company of one's fellows'. In this case the individual has come to like 'being with people', no matter what they are doing, and so this collapses into the first sense of 'enjoying the company of one's fellows', which, as we have seen, is a possible aim of education which need scarcely be taken into account by contemporary curriculum planners. Strictly speaking there is no second sense of 'enjoying the company of one's fellows' and, in so far as corporate pursuits merit a place on the curriculum, it must be on account of features *other than* the opportunities they provide for getting children to enjoy *being* with their fellows.

Warm togetherness, which is the only sense so far attached to the expression 'enjoying the company of others', need not claim much of the educator's attention; but perhaps Nisbet is not concerned that it should. Quite possibly, by his remarks about getting children interested in others and getting children actively to love their neighbours, Nisbet is wanting to emphasize basic moral education or the ideal of altruism. If this is the case, these would need to be distinguished (as I have suggested already in a previous section) since their status as educational aims is very different. But, again, Nisbet may have quite other aims in mind, perhaps such ideals as friendship or worth-while personal relationships or fraternity. To explore these notions in full would take another paper at least, for there are three crucial questions which demand detailed analysis—matters for the conceptual scalpel rather than the blunt axe I have wielded for the most part so far. First, there is the question of what is meant by notions like 'fraternity' and 'friendship'. Secondly, one wants to know whether feelings of friendship and fraternity are, logically or psychologically, necessary conditions of education. Thirdly, if fraternity or friendship are to be promoted in school for their own sake, what exactly is their status? Are they notions which are intrinsically part of basic morality or are they ideals to be exhibited



rather than insisted on? Certainly there is room for debate, for the ideal of fraternity has its contemporary dissenters.

The doctrine of alienation is related to the most dangerous and least rewarding aspect of the French revolution: the terrifying injunction to fraternity. To speak very personally and seriously, I approve both liberty and equality; I regard it as an essential liberty that I am not promiscuously called 'Brother'. I welcome the division of labour and the diversity, even the anomie of advanced society.<sup>37</sup>

'Socialization' represents a trap for the unwary educator. In one sense education must be socialization: there is nothing else for the child to learn except what comprises his cultural inheritance; and there is no other way for a human being to make the most of himself than by learning to recognize himself in the mirror of this inheritance'.<sup>38</sup> But it does not follow from this that children must be programmed with an identical set of social facts, skills, dispositions and so on. We must beware of shaky card-castle arguments, purporting to be built on the solid conceptual truth that education is socialization, and seeming to demonstrate conclusively that, for example, children must be taught blind conformity in moral matters, that they must be moulded into certain social roles and that we are justified in imbuing them with a taste for 'togetherness'. As we have seen these conclusions just do not follow.

But, equally, we must not allow our wariness about the use to which 'socialization' can be put to further all kinds of conformist causes (in the same way that growth theory may be used to support riots of individualism) to blind us to some important aims of education. For talk of 'socialization' also draws attention to the need to determine how, and when, one should get children to understand and appraise the particular society they live in; to establish what kinds of social skills to complement that understanding, it should be the responsibility of the school to teach; to work out precisely what constitutes a basic moral education; to consider how different ideals of life can best be represented in schools; and to explore the status of ideals like friendship and fraternity. It would be a pity if, in rejecting all talk of socialization out of hand as being concerned with education for conformity, these urgent and pressing problems were ignored.

## Notes

- 1 M. Oakshott, 'Learning and teaching', in *The Concept of Education*, ed. R. S. Peters, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 158.

- 2 E. Durkheim, *Education and Sociology*, New York, 1956, p. 71.
- 3 Ibid., p. 72.
- 4 Ibid., p. 77.
- 5 Ibid., p. 70.
- 6 Ibid., p. 71.
- 7 Ibid., p. 67.
- 8 Ibid., p. 64.
- 9 Ibid., p. 61.
- 10 For an introduction to the complexities of Durkheimian interpretation see Robert A. Nisbet, *Emile Durkheim*, New Jersey, 1965, pt 1.
- 11 H.M.S.O., *Primary Education in Wales*, 1968, p. 167.
- 12 See, for instance, O. G. Brim, Jr and S. Wheeler, *Socialization after Childhood*, New York, 1966; P. Mussen, 'Early socialization: Learning and identification', in *New Directions in Psychology*, vol. 3, ed. T. M. Newcomb, New York, 1967, esp. pp. 53-9; R. Brown, *Social Psychology*, New York, 1965, p. 193ff.
- 13 If one were not concerned particularly with educational aims but were considering other puzzling uses of the term 'socialization' in education, then the social science literature might well be helpful in illuminating these. For instance, the assertion that socialization is a necessary precondition of education may well rely, explicitly or implicitly, on some sense of socialization such as that cited by R. Havighurst and B. Neugarten in *Society and Education*, Boston, 1967, 3rd ed., p. 12: 'Socialization is often applied primarily to learning experiences that occur within the first years of life, in reference to patterns of feeding, sleeping, toilet training, control of aggression and sexuality . . .' (There is a similar statement in R. Brown, op. cit., p. 194.) 'Socialization', understood in this sense, easily makes intelligible the assertion that socialization is a necessary precondition of education, for unless such early learning has taken place it would be impossible to get very far with school education.
- 14 E. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, New York, 1961. See particularly pt 2, chs 15 and 16.
- 15 See the special issue of the *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. xxxviii, summer 1968, called 'Political socialization'.
- 16 H.M.S.O., *Primary Education*, 1959, p. 115.
- 17 W. A. L. Blyth, *English Primary Education*, vol. 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, p. 18.
- 18 Ibid., p. 87.
- 19 E. B. Warr, *Social Experience in the Junior School*, Methuen, 1951, p. 4.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 109-10.
- 21 See W. H. Kilpatrick, *Philosophy of Education*, New York, 1951. In the index one finds 'Socialization defined, 96f.' and 'Morality, meaning of . . . 96ff. . . .' Turning to p. 96 one finds in fact 'What, after all, is morality? In the attempt to define morality . . .' and no mention of socialization at all.

## *Socialization and education*

- 22 See P. F. Strawson, 'Social morality and individual ideal', *Philosophy*, 1961, and P. Winch, 'Nature and convention', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, 1960.
- 23 H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, O.U.P., 1961, ch. 9; P. F. Strawson, *op. cit.*
- 24 See P. F. Strawson, *op. cit.*, for an elaboration of this distinction.
- 25 See R. F. Dearden's paper on 'growth' in this volume (ch. 4).
- 26 B. D. Davies and A. Gibson, *The Social Education of the Adolescent*, U.L.P., 1967, p. 86.
- 27 A. Inkeles, 'Social structure and the socialization of competence', *Harvard Educational Review*, summer 1966, p. 265.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- 29 Schools Council Working Paper No. 7, *Closer Links between Teachers and Industry and Commerce*, H.M.S.O., 1966, p. 3.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 34 This was very probably what the writers of the Schools Council Working Paper No. 7 had in mind but, as I indicated above, it is not clear that the Schools Council programme would promote understanding and rational judgment.
- 35 See R. S. Peters' discussion of this problem in 'Michael Oakeshott's philosophy of education', *Politics and Experience* (essays presented to Professor Michael Oakeshott on the occasion of his retirement), C.U.P., 1968, esp. pp. 49-58.
- 36 S. Nisbet, *Purpose in the Curriculum*, U.L.P., 1957, p. 40. (Nisbet's italics.)
- 37 Donald G. MacRae, 'Karl Marx', in *The Founding Fathers of Social Science*, ed. T. Raison, Penguin, 1969, p. 69.
- 38 M. Oakeshott, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

# Creativity and education: A philosophical analysis

J. P. White

THE appearance of yet another article on creativity and education needs a preliminary apology. So much has been written on creativity in the last ten years, from technical articles on the validation of creativity tests to books like *The Goldmine between Your Ears*, and widely has the cult of creativity been adopted by teachers in Colleges of Education and elsewhere, that it is profitable perhaps to stop for a moment and look critically at some of the assumptions lying behind the various ideas which are being currently propagated. For, as I shall try to show, many of these ideas are radically confused; and it is in the desire to prevent such conceptual confusion from diverting teachers, especially in primary schools, from educational to non-educational or even anti-educational purposes, that I have written this article.

## Four cases of creativity

In this section and the next I want to say something in general about the notion of creativity; later I shall go on to talk about creativity in education.

Let me begin by considering four cases:

- ✓ 1. A girl at an infant school is given a pad of newsprint and a box of crayons. She is left alone to draw what she likes instead of having to fill in a colouring book with fixed outlines.
- ✓ 2. A boy of twelve is asked to write down as many uses as he can think of for a brick. He produces a great number of unusual uses (as a bedwarmer, paperweight, bookend, etc.).
- ✓ 3. A primary school child, learning mathematics, is given certain data and has to discover on his own a rule which explains them, instead of being told the rule by the teacher.
4. Dostoevsky as a novelist or Einstein as a scientist.

Each of the persons mentioned in these examples might be called by some 'creative'. What, if anything, have they in common?

(a) An answer frequently found in educational writings runs as follows. In each of these four people the 'creative process' is at work.

How it functions is mysterious: all one knows is that it is the product of some innately given power related in some intimate but obscure way to our unconscious mind. It is a power which thrives on exercise but withers away if checked. All children are born with creative powers, perhaps in varying degrees. Only in a few children do these powers develop to such an extent that as adults they can become Dostoevskys or Einsteins. Most children's creative growth is checked by parents' and teachers' rigid insistence on following rules in which the children are explicitly instructed. Creative growth in one direction, say in mathematics, can be checked by too great insistence on following explicit rules in other areas, e.g. art. Teachers who move away from such insistence on rules and allow children more spontaneity, as in 1. and 3., are developing, not stunting, these creative powers.

On this account, the three children in 1.-3. differ only in degree from Dostoevsky or Einstein in their creative thinking. Great artists and scientists, reporting on their processes of thought, commonly stress the importance of being free from conventional rules: creative thinking is a matter of letting the mind play round a topic, of 'incubating' ideas and leaving the unconscious to make those connexions between them which give rise to 'inspiration'. The children in the first three examples are playing freely with ideas in a similar, though less developed, way.

(b) I want to argue that the account just given is a fairy story. What the four cases have in common is the application to each of them of a word, 'creativity'. But the meaning of this word is not a mysterious inner process. In fact, it has no one meaning in these different examples, but a number of meanings, with just enough in common between them to make it plausible, though confusing, to apply the same word to all four cases.

One source of confusion here goes back to educationists' traditional adherence to some sort of faculty psychology. Teachers have long since been encouraged to believe that their task consists in training some faculty of the mind—e.g. in strengthening the Will or the Memory. Plenty of practice at character-building or retentive tasks has been thought useful in toughening up these 'mental muscles'. Although such faculty psychology is today largely outmoded, there still seems today to be much support for the notion of a creative faculty, which for its development requires practice of a different sort: not practice in storing ideas, as with the Memory, but practice in letting ideas flow from their sources in the Unconscious.

Now faculty psychology, as Ryle emphasizes in the *Concept of Mind*, rests on a pictorial model of the mind as some sort of ghostly machine with different parts which carry out different functions: willing,

remembering, etc. It is particularly easy to resort to such pictorial models, because of the natural but dangerous tendency we have to construe all substantival expressions as if they stand for things in the world in the way that 'chair' stands for actual chairs. In using an expression like 'training the Will' we naturally incline to think that there are parts of our mind called 'wills' which are trainable in some such way as horses or sheepdogs are trained. But in fact, as Ryle and other recent writers have shown, the logic of mental words is more complicated than this simple 'name-thing' theory of meaning would allow.

In the next section I shall examine the logic of 'creative', as used in the fourth example, to refer to such figures as Dostoevsky and Einstein: it will become clear, I hope, why in these cases 'creativity' is not to be seen as labelling a faculty. In later sections I shall turn to the other three cases, which are of more direct educational interest.

### The logic of 'creativity'

I shall begin the analysis of 'creative' in the case 4. sense by looking at a typical example of its use. The following passage is from the back cover of D. F. Pears's recent book on Bertrand Russell:

He [Pears] traces the development of Russell's metaphysics and theory of knowledge during his great creative period from 1905 to 1919. In these fifteen years a considerable part of the history of philosophy was the history of the development of his ideas.

There are two ways in which this quotation is helpful in bringing out the logic of 'creative':

(a) To uncover the meaning of a word it is often useful to ask what it is being contrasted with. Here the contrast is between the sort of work Russell did from 1905 to 1919 and what he did before and after this time. It is clear that what the writer has in mind in making this contrast is the *value* or *importance* of Russell's work in metaphysics and theory of knowledge from 1905 to 1919 as compared with what went before and after. In a similar way we might contrast Dostoevsky as a 'highly creative' writer with a writer of hack detective stories, who we might deny was 'creative' at all: again it is the value—in this case the aesthetic value—of the works of the two novelists which is at issue. As with artists, so with scientists: how far we are prepared to call them 'creative' seems to vary according to the value of their discoveries as assessed by the intrinsic standards of their discipline.

(b) The second point has already partly emerged in (a), and is

'Creative' is a medal which we pin on public products, not the name of private processes. Of course, it may be the case that the thought-processes of those whom we call 'creative' may be of a very peculiar sort. But if so—and here I am not claiming that there is any evidence for this—that would be a coincidence: it is not in virtue of that that we call them 'creative' but in virtue of their achievements.

### Creativity in education: creativity tests and discovery methods

In this section and the next I shall try to see how far the children in cases 1., 2. and 3. of the first section, who are said to be 'creative', are so in anything like the same sense as a creative worker in 4. is 'creative'. I shall also be concerned, as well as with these logical points, with the evaluative question of how useful it is to promote in schools the sorts of creativity picked out in these first three examples. Because most of the argument in these matters centres on the sort of creativity manifested by the girl crayoning in the first example, I shall postpone my full discussion of this case, devoting to it the whole of the section after this. I shall deal now with cases 1. and 2.

(a) *Case 1.* What has the boy thinking out different uses for a brick in common with creative artists or scientists in 4.? He appears to have more in common with them than the child crayoning in 1. who is doing what she likes. For his achievement presupposes two things:

- (i) that he knows what a brick is and what its usual uses are, and
- ✓ (ii) that in his supposition of what a brick might be used for he is guided in his thinking by certain *rules*. It is presumably not open to him to put down *anything* as a use of a brick. There has to be some intelligible connexion between the use proposed and the brick itself: the use has to be compatible with the properties of the brick. It would not do, for instance, to say that a brick could be used as a trumpet (unless some way is found of making this intelligible). Therefore, the boy's thinking must be guided by the rule that the use must conform to the brick's properties.

In (i) and (ii) the boy is unlike the girl in the first example. She did not have to know anything in particular; he does. She could do what she liked; he has to follow certain procedures. In (i) and (ii), however, the boy is like a creative artist or scientist. For there are certain things—scientific theories, traditional procedures, properties of materials, etc.—which the creative worker has to know, and (ii) artistic or scientific creativeness involves an imaginative leap to

a new perspective. This imaginative enterprise is guided by certain rules which differ from discipline to discipline: the scientist searches for a hypothesis, but not of any sort, but one which is likely to fit the facts he is concerned with (just as the boy with the brick had to think up uses fitting the fact that bricks have such-and-such properties); the poet searches for images, rhymes, etc., which will help to make an aesthetically valuable poem.

Where examples 2. and 4. diverge, i.e. when the boy is unlike a creative worker, is in the *point* of their activity. We call good artists and scientists 'creative' because they have produced something aesthetically or intellectually valuable. But there does not seem to be any value—if we discount extrinsic value, e.g. in helping one to get high marks in a creativity test—in producing ingenious uses for a brick. If so, the boy in example 2. is not 'creative' in the sense of example 4. He may have certain things in common with creative workers; but he lacks precisely that feature in virtue of which we call them 'creative'.

'Creativity' as in example 2. is educationally relevant in (at least) two different contexts. It may appear in the context of what is taught: teachers may think it desirable to promote such 'imaginative activity', by teaching children how to write stories or poems, and giving high praise to a child who uses his imagination in the way the boy with the brick did. Or it may appear—as indeed the 'use of a brick' example does—in tests of creativity. If it is believed in either of these cases that the children called 'creative' are creative in the same sense as creative artists etc. in 4. are creative, then this belief is just false, unless what the case 2. children produce can be shown to be intellectually or aesthetically valuable. It may be held, on the other hand, especially as far as creativity testing is concerned, that although creativity in case 2. is not identical in meaning with creativity in case 4. there is an empirical connexion between the two cases, in that a child scoring high in a creativity test is more likely to produce creative work in the case 4. sense, than a child who scores low. The final test of this claim is, as I say, empirical—provided that one can give more specific content to the general notion of 'producing creative work'. The hypothesis seems a far more plausible one if, when specified, it claims that a boy who can think up two hundred uses for a brick is, say, a good bet as a potential advertising copy-writer, than if it claims he is likely to make advances in nuclear physics. This is because undergoing the 'brick' test and writing advertising copy both involve setting one's sights on what is unfamiliar and likely to surprise. Doing research in physics involves setting one's sights on the pursuit of truth in a particular area, with all the supreme difficulties that this brings with it. In other words, doing physics and



thinking out the uses of a brick have very little in common: one could imagine many children enjoying the fantasy of the 'brick' test who shied at the rigours of physics. There *might* be an empirical connexion between the two cases: as a philosopher I cannot rule it out by logic; but just as it is in the last analysis an empirical question whether or not children getting toy typewriters on their ninth birthday tend to take up sedentary occupations, in neither case does there seem to be any reason why the hypothesis is likely to be true.

The previous paragraph is about creativity testing. But many of its points are relevant to the question: how far is it educationally desirable to get children to be creative (in the present sense) in the poems and stories they write in English lessons? If it could be shown that there is an empirical connexion between their being creative in *this* sense, and their being creative in the example 4. sense, such that the first tends to promote the second, there might be something to be said for it. But, just as in the previous argument about doing physics, there is a gap between being imaginative, where this connotes aesthetic value, and being imaginative like the boy with the brick. *Prima facie*, one would doubt an empirical connexion for this reason: there may be one; but as far as I know, this has not been proved.<sup>1</sup>

(b) Case 3. What has the child 'discovering' a mathematical rule in common with a 'creative' mathematician in example 4.? He has not discovered a mathematical rule unknown to mathematicians. So he is clearly not 'creative' in the example 4. sense. But, one might argue, the first man who did discover the mathematical rule was 'creative' in this sense, and the child is in one way in a similar position to this early genius: for him it is as valuable a discovery as it was for the first discoverer. both have broken new ground.

~~But this will not do.~~ The argument involves a shift from the notion of 'valuable within mathematics', for which specific criteria can be laid down, to the obscurer notion of 'valuable for him'. Not only is this obscure, but it is also unclear that learning the rule in the so-called 'non-creative' way, i.e. by being told what it is by the teacher, could not be in some sense 'valuable for him'. If so, the argument blurs the distinction which it was intended to clarify.

A different argument might be that the child is 'creative' because he is thinking in the same sort of way as a creative mathematician does. But (i) once again, if this means that his private thought processes are like those of the creative mathematician, we meet the objections that we do not usually know what these are in the case of creative mathematicians, and that we call the latter 'creative' in virtue of the importance of what they discover, and (ii) if one means

### *Creativity and education: A philosophical analysis*

that he follows the same sort of procedures as the creative mathematician, then this is false. For the boy and the mathematician are in different situations. In the case of the boy, his teacher has structured the situation in such a way, by, e.g., providing clues to guide the child close to the desired goal, that the child takes it for granted that there is a rule to be discovered, that the teacher knows what it is, and that by following the teacher's direction he can come to find out what it is as well. None of these conditions holds for the creative mathematician, who therefore could not have made his discovery in the same way as the child.

It seems, therefore, that we cannot call the child 'creative' because he is in any way like a creative mathematician. If we are to hold to the notion of 'creative' to distinguish a child learning by discovery methods from one learning by being instructed, the only meaning which 'creative' seems to have is that the child is not told what the answer is. But even this is not crystal-clear. For if a teacher gives a great number of clues, so that almost anyone could work out the answer, but the teacher does not actually say what the answer is, on the account so far given children discovering the answer should be called 'creative'—but in fact the term tends only to be applied when very few clues are supplied and the child has to deduce a good deal on his own. So if we want to, we can say that a child is 'creative' when he finds out a rule without being told and without many clues; but (i) the criteria for the application of the term are still not clear, as one needs to know—roughly, at any rate—how many clues he can have without losing the title, and also what counts as a clue; no indication is given of how these matters are to be settled, and (ii) there is the familiar point that the rationale for using the word 'creative' is not clear, and that there is the danger of confusing its use in this context with its use in others.

With regard to the educational value of 'discovery' methods, there is not much to say. Assuming one can produce acceptable criteria for distinguishing these methods from others, it is an empirical question to decide how far they are more likely than other methods to produce learning. One might well hypothesize that methods placing more stress on the child's initiative and curiosity were motivationally more recommendable than more 'formal' methods in certain circumstances; but whether this is so or not depends, as I say, on empirical tests.

### **Creativity in education: aesthetic subjects**

We still have not dealt with the case of the girl at the infant school crayoning what she likes on her pad of newsprint (case 1.). What, if

anything, has she in common with the creative artist of example 4.? One is immediately tempted to reply: not very much. They both make marks on paper, true, but beyond that there is this important and obvious difference between them: the artist is making his marks with a particular intention in mind, to produce an aesthetically satisfying picture, and he makes use of all sorts of professional techniques to make his marks conform to this end; neither of these things can be said of the little girl. To say that *she* is 'creative' is to say nothing more than that she is drawing what she wants, with no one telling her what to do. What educational value there is in this is difficult to see.

This is one answer. But a different answer—one which is currently, not to say perennially, influential in educational circles—runs quite otherwise. According to this answer, to say that a child producing paintings in art lessons (or poems and stories in English lessons) is being 'creative', is to use this word in precisely the same sense as one uses it of well-known artists and writers: that is, a creative child is one who produces something of aesthetic value, not merely one who does what he wants. The aesthetic value of children's art may be less than that of artists' work, or, as Herbert Read believes, it may be impossible to compare the two in respect of aesthetic value;<sup>2</sup> but in either case, there is no denying that at least some children's work is aesthetically valuable (and so creative).

There are a number of different ways in which such a conclusion is commonly supported. In what follows I shall outline and discuss some of these arguments. The matter is somewhat complicated by the facts (a) that some proponents of children's creativity would argue that *all* children are creative in the sense under discussion, and others that only *some* are, and (b) that some are especially concerned with literature and others with visual art. Some of the arguments which follow are restricted to a claim about some, but not all, children or about one art-form in particular; others may be taken in a less restricted sense. I shall try to make clear the scope of the arguments as I go.

(a) The first argument is that (all or some) children's free art (visual or literary) has a certain *originality*: this is what makes it of aesthetic value.

There are two problems here: (i) what is meant by calling a child's product 'original'? and (ii) how far is originality a criterion of aesthetic value?

(i) Let us take the case of the little girl crayoning (a child writing a story would do as well). Some might claim that *whatever* the child produced under free conditions would be original. Now, clearly, part at least of the meaning of 'original' here is 'different, in some

way, from previous products';<sup>3</sup> but the problem is, different in what way? Suppose the child used her freedom to produce a conventional picture of a house with smoke curling from the chimney-pots and a curved front path. Would this count as being original? If not—on the grounds that the picture is not different from conventional expectations—the argument that all children's free work is original falls to the ground, for children *do* produce conventional work. One might try to defend it by arguing that even though the drawing is conventional the way in which it is drawn with these particular colours and proportions is something of the child's own. It is the details of the execution which make it original. But this sort of argument is self-defeating; for if one allows in this way any perceptible difference in the way a picture is drawn to signify originality, then even colouring in fixed outlines might well lead to an original work (it would indeed be surprising if it did not). But since it is part of the thesis under discussion that originality is a result of free conditions only and that fixed outline colouring stultifies its development, the argument contains a contradiction.

We are still not clear what might usefully be meant by 'originality'. Suppose we examine the more restricted thesis, that only some free work is original, that is, only that work which does not conform to conventional expectations in the way that the conventional drawing of the house did. Let us admit—without worrying too much over the criteria for conforming to conventional expectations—that many young children's drawings are original in this sense. Let us take, for example, drawings which do not appear to represent anything recognizable, like plates 1a, 1b and 2 in Read's *Education through Art*.

In some ways such drawings resemble 'abstract' paintings produced by adult artists: if one went only by what one saw without knowing who the artist was, one might conceivably even mistake a child's drawing in some cases for an adult's. But there is an important difference between the two artists here. To say that both are producing something which is 'different from conventional expectations' obscures the fact that the adult artist is *reacting against* conventional standards, while the child clearly is not. Originality in the case of the adult has written into it this intention—to produce something different—which in its turn implies a knowledge of what the conventional standards are. Unconventional children's drawings, like the ones in Read's book, are not original in this sense, since the children who draw them have neither this intention nor this knowledge.

(ii) But even if young children's work were original in this sense—and with older children the predicate may in certain cases be applicable—originality is not a sufficient condition of aesthetic value.<sup>4</sup>

For if an adult artist, say, decides to break out of the tradition in which he has been trained and succeeds in this, it does not follow that his work will be of aesthetic merit: his work may be merely bizarre, incapable of providing any aesthetic experience. Sometimes, it is true, we use the term 'original' in a more restricted sense than this, calling a work original only if it is different from previous work in such a way that it is a vehicle of a hitherto unfelt aesthetic experience. But this is to include in the concept of originality the concept of aesthetic value. If in the thesis under discussion—that all or some children's work is aesthetically valuable in so far as it is original—'original' is to be understood as a value term, the thesis becomes trivially true by definition.

The overall conclusion on argument (a), therefore, is that it is either true by definition or invalid if interpreted in the other senses already mentioned. This is not to deny that some children may sometimes produce work which is original (where this implies aesthetic value). Being able to tell when they do so depends on what criteria there are of aesthetic value. I turn to this problem in the following section.

(b) A second argument supporting the thesis that children's art (all or some; visual or literary) is aesthetically valuable may rest on the presumed subjectivity of judgments of aesthetic value. One might follow Ayer<sup>5</sup> in arguing that to say that 'painting is good' is simply to express the feelings of approval the painting evokes in one, just as in a moral context, to say 'he is a good man' is simply to express the feelings of approval which his actions evoke in one. On this theory, provided that a person looking at a child's drawing or poem approves of it, that is sufficient to make it aesthetically valuable (for him). Since children's art-products often do meet with others' approval, it follows that much, if not all, of children's art is aesthetically valuable.

Now there is much that has been written about such an 'emotive' theory of aesthetic judgment,<sup>6</sup> and in an article of this length I shall restrict myself to two observations. (i) Ayer's theory tries to account for the widespread variation in aesthetic standards from age to age, culture to culture and individual to individual. But the existence of such variation is not incompatible with the existence of objective standards. For the disputants might agree on the existence of certain very general aesthetic canons—formal harmony, for instance, or expressive power—but disagree either about more specific canons (about the importance of the classical unities in drama, say) or about the weight that should be put on the general canons (some tending to favour formal qualities, say, others expressive). (ii) Seeing that both aesthetic and moral judgments can be reduced to expressions of (dis)approval, what distinguishes a moral from an aesthetic

judgment? How does one know that an admirer of a painting is showing *aesthetic* rather than moral approval of it? If there exists a domain of the aesthetic as well as a domain of the moral, then how is this domain delimited? If it is not delimited in any way, it is not distinguishable from the moral; but if it is delimited there must be some sort of criteria for delimiting it. Therefore not anything that people like looking at could count as aesthetically valuable. So if people just like looking at a child's painting this in itself does not show that it is of any *aesthetic* merit. There are all sorts of reasons why people might like looking: they might be proud of the progress that the child—if he were their child—was making in his control of the pencil; they might be delighted at recognizing the subject of the child's drawing, etc. But what would count as seeing the picture as of *aesthetic* interest? As I said, there must be *some* criteria here. The difficulty of spelling out these criteria in words should not be taken to show that such criteria do not exist. If we are to talk in aesthetic terms at all, they *must* exist.

(c) A third argument to show that some children's work is aesthetically valuable might run as follows: You have been writing about the 'aesthetically valuable' as if this is a term only applicable to acknowledged works of art. But just because children's art is not aesthetically valuable according to the criteria applicable to a Rembrandt or a Matisse, it does not follow that it is not aesthetically valuable. For, as Herbert Read shows, many children's drawings possess the 'specific aesthetic quality' of 'naïvety'—indicating, as he says, 'a certain "vision" of things which is peculiar to children and perhaps to certain rare adults who retain this childlike faculty.'

Part of this thesis I accept. A work does not have to be of the first rank to be aesthetically valuable. Paintings displayed at local amateur exhibitions may be of aesthetic merit (even though, compared with those in the Tate, they may not be rated so highly). So it is not impossible that children's work can be seen as aesthetically valuable if one does not pitch one's requirements too high. It is true also that if their work is aesthetically valuable there must be some criteria here to which they conform. But talk of 'naïvety' as a specific aesthetic quality makes little sense; for to be an aesthetic quality, naïvety must be something publicly observable, like harmony or grace. But in the quotation from Read it picks out something in the private world of the mind—a certain unsophisticated way of looking at things; there is no guarantee that someone with such an outlook will produce anything aesthetically valuable even in a limited way. I leave open the question whether there are other *sui generis* aesthetic qualities to be found in children's art. There may be: one would have to deal with further claims as they arose.

Before I leave the three arguments (a)-(c) there is a last, but most important point to make about them. Suppose that by these or other arguments it could be shown decisively that all, or at least some, children's unguided work is aesthetically valuable. Would this in itself justify the exclusive use of unguided activity *educationally*? Surely not: for there would still be forms of aesthetic experience which the child could not enjoy without being initiated into literary or artistic traditions; the longer he is left on his own producing his (admittedly aesthetically valuable) drawings and stories, the more he is being deprived of opportunities to extend his aesthetic sensibility in other directions.

The three arguments just discussed are intended to support the thesis that (some or all) children's work is aesthetically valuable. Another argument supports a somewhat different thesis, one restricted to children's 'creative writing'. This is that many if not all children are capable, in certain free conditions, of writing *literature*. This is what Britton argues in a recent paper on the teaching of English.<sup>8</sup> He claims that when a child becomes a spectator of his own past experience and writes about this for its own sake, he is doing something which falls in the same category as what adult poets and novelists do. There is only a difference of degree between them: both are writing 'literature'. Now if one defines literature as retrospective description of the sort mentioned, then it may well be the case that most children can write literature in certain 'free conditions'. But this definition of literature says nothing about aesthetic value. The daily journal of a dull Victorian lady might be devoid of aesthetic value: yet on this definition it might well be a piece of literature. Now to call a piece of work 'literature' is usually to imply that it is aesthetically valuable in some way. There is no harm in redefining the word, as long as it is clear what it is taken to mean; but the question now is: given that children are capable of writing literature in the redefined sense, what is the point of encouraging them to do so? It may be educationally valuable to get children to write something of *aesthetic* interest, for at least this achievement is some indication that they are coming to understand what the realm of the aesthetic involves, and I take it as axiomatic here that such an understanding is a necessary part of a proper education. But to show that it is educationally valuable to write down one's retrospections requires further argument.

This leads me into a more general discussion of the educational value of creative activities in the present sense, that is, those in which the teacher plays a minimal role, merely providing materials and possibly also topics about which the children can draw or write what they want. I have tried to show that these activities cannot be

justified on the grounds that what the children produce is creative in the sense of aesthetically valuable. But it may be claimed that there is an *empirical* connexion between these activities and being creative in the 'value' sense.

There are two theses here, one broader, one narrower. 1. The broader thesis, espoused by, for instance, Lowenfeld and Read, is that free activity in art lessons is an efficient way of promoting creativity in the value sense in *any* discipline, and conversely, that to disallow such free activity is to dam up the child's creative forces and make him less likely to produce valuable work in physics, history, etc. *as well as* in art. Read, quoting Jaensch, observes:

Once the creative powers are freed in one direction . . . once the shackles of school passivity are broken at one point, a kind of inner liberation, the awakening of a higher activity generally sets in. Above all, to the eidetic sphere of development, as well as to the mentality of the artist, there belongs a peculiar structure of the mental powers, particularly of thinking; and the arousing and vivifying of these powers benefit all the subjects taught, even the most rigorously logical. <sup>9</sup>

Read argues, therefore, that education should be 'through art', that is, intellectual education should have a solid bedrock of art education.

Now this thesis seems to be based on a conception of creativity (in the value sense) as some sort of inner source of mental energy which can be dammed up or, alternatively, set free to flow into different channels of intellectual or aesthetic activity. I hope my argument in the second section is sufficient to dispose of this claim: 'creative' is a term applying to public products rather than private processes.

As well as this, the thesis also ignores differences in what counts as being creative in different areas. It may or may not be likely that a child with plenty of experience of free activity in art lessons will later go on to produce something aesthetically valuable in visual art. But it is hard to see how such experience will help him to produce something, say, mathematically or scientifically valuable. It is certainly not sufficient: the mathematical or scientific understanding which this presupposes requires a rigorous initiation into these disciplines. Such initiation is not only helpful but necessary to the production of something valuable in these areas. This is a logical truth. But what grounds there are for the present thesis—that free activity in art is also helpful—are not made clear. Plato in the *Republic* puts education in the arts as the bedrock of his curriculum, with mathematics and dialectic emerging from it; but he at least provides a rationale for this in terms of his theory of knowledge and



psychology. But assuming, for reasons too long to go into here, that *this* sort of rationale will not do, what sort of rationale is given us? There is no such *logical* connexion between free activity in art and creativity in mathematics, etc. (as there is between the latter and learning mathematics); but neither does the thesis rest on any validated *empirical* connexion. 2. The narrower thesis is that free activity in art (or English) lessons is an efficient way of promoting creativity in the value sense *in art or literature*. But how plausible this thesis is depends on precisely what is being claimed. Let us look at art, by way of example. If the point of letting very young children play freely with paints, paper, clay, etc. is to familiarize them with (some of) the properties of these materials, then this is clearly a rational technique for starting children off on the road to producing aesthetically interesting pictures. But in itself it will not take them very far: in addition, all sorts of techniques will have to be learned—of colour-mixing, drawing, etc.—and, most important, the children will have to be initiated into the domain of the aesthetic. Similar points could be made about ‘creative writing’ in the present sense of the term. That free writing might be a useful device in certain specific situations will be generally accepted: it might provide practice for a child learning handwriting, or it might be useful remedially for a child who has a ‘block’ about writing. But in order to write something of literary value, all sorts of further techniques are necessary—as well as ideas worth expressing. In view of these requirements in the creation of something valuable both in art and in literature, it would seem that in both cases the longer one leaves the child to his own devices—except for the specific purposes mentioned—the *harder* it becomes for him, not less, to get inside the relevant discipline.

In all this I am stressing the need for teachers of creative activities in the present sense to be critical of the more grandiose claims that are made for them and to ask themselves what—discounting these—are their *aims* in encouraging free activity and whether free activity is an adequate means to these ends. I am not denying that there are such aims which are both realizable and worth while. Some of these, as I indicated in the previous paragraph—like teaching properties of materials or handwriting—are clearly *educationally* worth while. (No doubt there are other such aims besides the ones I mentioned.) But there are at least two other ways, not necessarily connected with education, in which free activities may be valuable.

(a) They may be *therapeutically* valuable. Just as some disturbed adults find relief from their anxieties in dabbling in paint or scribbling down their thoughts, this may also be true for certain disturbed children. As long as one does not make the mistake of seeing all children as requiring to be cured—a mistake connected with the

belief that education is largely a matter of promoting mental health<sup>10</sup>—activities which are 'creative' in the sense that one just does what one wants may have a limited therapeutic use.

(b) They may be worth making some provision for simply because, given that they are in no way immoral, children enjoy them. For the child is not merely to be seen as a recipient of education; there is also his own world, his own interests and strivings, to be taken into account. Just as we provide adventure playgrounds, so we have good grounds for providing the paint and the ink and the paper, etc. for other sorts of pastimes.

I said above that (a) and (b) are not necessarily connected with education. I mean by this that they could be, and sometimes are, pursued in institutions other than schools—whose job, I take it, is essentially that of educating. It happens in many cases that these purposes, especially (b), are pursued at school. Where they are, teachers of creative activities may have these further purposes in mind. What is important, however, is to be clear on the distinctions I have mentioned: has the work an educational purpose, or is it not necessarily connected with education—and within these categories, what is it precisely aiming at?

## Conclusion

I have devoted this article to teasing out some of the problems to do with the meaning of 'creativity' and its place in education. Instead of summarizing, I will finish by raising, but not solving, a further problem. On the whole I have been somewhat sceptical of the educational value of creative activities in some of the senses of this term. But I have not discussed the pros and cons of the teacher's aiming at making his pupils 'creative' in the value sense of the term, that is, at getting them to produce something of value in history, physics, literature, etc. I have taken it as axiomatic here that if creative activities in some sense or other *did* lead to this result, this would be enough to show their educational value. But would it? Is it any part of the educator's task to teach people to be creative? This raises very large questions about the nature of education in general and—for this is again, I think, where the main problems are—about the nature of aesthetic education in particular. I hope to go into these problems at another time.

## Notes

- 1 It might be held that children producing imaginative stories, etc., in the 'boy with the brick' sense of 'imaginative', are writing imaginatively in the 'aesthetically valuable' sense. Some of the

grounds for claiming this may rest on arguments which I discuss in the next section.

- 2 H. Read, *Education through Art*, Faber, 1943, pp. 210-12.
- 3 One must also rule out sheer *coincidence* as a ground for denying originality, as one does with well-known artists: if a masterpiece happened to be very similar in some respects to an earlier work, we would not deny its originality if the artist could not possibly have known the earlier work. Thus, too, with the child.
- 4 This is to omit the further question whether originality is even a *necessary* condition of aesthetic value. On this, see S. Hook (ed.), *Art and Philosophy*, New York, 1966, p. 24ff., p. 29ff.
- 5 A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (2nd ed.), Gollancz, 1946, ch. 6.
- 6 Cf. M. Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, New York, 1958, ch. 10.
- 7 H. Read, *op. cit.*, p. 212.
- 8 J. Britton, 'Literature', *The Arts and Current Tendencies in Education*, University of London Institute of Education, 1963, p. 42.
- 9 *Op. cit.*, p. 59.
- 10 Cf. R. S. Peters, 'Mental health as an educational aim', in *Aims in Education*, T. H. B. Hollins, ed., Manchester University Press, 1964.

**Reason**

part **2**

# The concept of reason

9

D. Pole

## The outline of a concept

SUPPOSE I were to ask 'What is Reason?' (the capital 'R' being deliberate); I fear I may remind my readers of Mr Chandband, who asks, it will be recalled, 'What is this Terewth?'. The present philosophical climate hardly promises a sunny reception, a warm or fertilizing shower of anticipatory applause. How, once again, is Reason in the abstract to be thought of, as against my particular reasons or yours? Not at all, or as little as possible, so many philosophers might tell us; but for grounds which I hope will emerge, that cry of our self-appointed umpires—a cry, as it were, of 'No ball'—leaves me, as it found me, dissatisfied. Traditionally at least, reason is first thought of as objective, and further as universal and necessary. Now if I, too, call in question the solidity of that traditional answer, it will be to qualify rather than to reject it. For such notions, and most notably the latter two, are to be taken as normative or regulative; thus not unlike Kantian Ideas of Reason. Certainly we are not to expect to find universality and necessity everywhere, so to speak, already achieved, and hence reject out of hand whatever falls short of them and of their high requirements. But far less should we wash our hands of the whole enterprise. I shall begin with the first, namely, objectivity.

## Objectivity

The notion is one, like so many, that we can best illustrate by what we oppose it to; we distinguish the objectively binding from matters of choice, of whim or preference. The word 'objective' conceals dangers to which addicts of etymology—incidentally a dangerous, perhaps debilitating addiction for philosophers—would seem especially vulnerable. For the objective need entail no reference to 'objects', to their presence or absence; even, as in Plato, to timeless objects, to what one might call 'special status' objects. The moral law is not a kind of 'thing'; nor are the principles of scientific enquiry.

Plato, to those who choose to understand him, demonstrated what might be called the primacy of the normative. For all thought, intrinsically, in its nature, presupposes a further possibility: the appeal to standards. It involves or presupposes evaluation. But he himself half undid his own achievement by straightaway reifying those standards, which become 'forms', timeless objects.

Now the model is an inviting one, doubtless; it is one we must first understand, if only to free ourselves from it. For suppose that you and I disagree; that is, we genuinely disagree, so that one of us is right or at least one wrong—which, incidentally, yields another definition of objectivity or, if you like, of issues that are 'objective' as against others. (I speak deliberately of 'others'; it is better to say 'non-objective', or 'arbitrary', rather than the formal counterpart, 'subjective', a term carrying misleading suggestions.) There must be something, it would seem, that we disagree about; but 'something' is, notoriously, a treacherous word. I perhaps assert, you deny, that  $S$  is  $P$ ; for example, that the king is in his counting-house. Now surely, it is so, or else not. The object—or, more accurately, the presence or absence of an appropriate object—gives the statement its full status *qua* statement; as something that 'is either true or false'. The object is what makes it objective. So far so good: but of course there remains another question, and one hardly to be ignored, namely which? How do we decide? The answer may seem obvious. We decide by looking; a philosopher can look at a king, and normally the process can end there. No one's eyes are infallible, however; if one can 'hear' voices, I suppose one can also 'see' kings—at least in Pirandello's play, *Enrico IV* (whose real name is withheld), long sees himself as a king and his servants as feudal retainers.

Suppose I suspect myself of 'seeing' things; of course, much remains that I can do. I can change my own viewpoint; test one sense by another, say, sight by touch; appeal to a third party and so on. The veridicity of ordinary observation is not always taken for granted, or need not be; and a single, unconfirmed 'observation', running counter to some well established scientific theory, will probably be treated as carrying little weight. We appeal to a multiplicity of criteria—criteria that must in turn be 'objective'. They must be objective, but not 'objects', even Platonic or 'special status' objects, such as are to be 'seen' with the eye of the mind. For if so, to underwrite the objectivity of those, we shall need further objects; and plainly the process is infinite. To say so, of course, is not to imply that criteria accepted hitherto must on that account be accepted uncritically; but only this—that, whether we seek to challenge or to endorse them, the appeal to objects does nothing to help.

*The unity of reason*

Reason, first, clearly, in the broad sense I began with, comprises a great variety of procedures; of things that we appeal to as 'reasons', say, tests, evidence, arguments and the like; procedures that vary from field to field, from discipline to discipline; which further being self-correcting in some degree, evolve and are modified historically. (One must also add 'self-evident' truths that of course may serve as 'reasons', but need not. They may merely be accepted in themselves and on their own account. Of those I shall speak more presently.) Hence, two major issues confront us; first, reason is both multi-form and unitary. Its unity is easily lost sight of amid diversities that are certainly real enough; and no less easily falsified in the strait-jacket of some quasi-logicistic formula. Secondly, a process, as evolving and self-modifying, there is no time at which its character can be specifiable definitively. To deal first with the latter point, which is the simpler: say, of games or institutions, it is plain that we can—and strictly enough, in one sense—specify, not only the present practice, but the future developments. It surely makes clear enough sense to predict that in fifty years' time tennis, which I still deliberately refer to as 'tennis', will be a rather different thing from what it is now, perhaps with partly modified rules. In another sense, of course, we remain necessarily ignorant; for any changes, once known, are no longer unknown—as yet to evolve or appear. Similarly when we speak of Reason. We can contemplate its future, its probable future, as well as its authenticated past. Take Euclid's procedures, or Newton's; no present geometer or physicist would endorse or wholly endorse them. They still belong, and can be seen as belonging, to the history of rational enquiry, with its progressive evolution of adequate forms. And, at the same time, we can confidently predict the future emergence of new procedures; and to say so, in one sense, is to identify them—which, of course, in another sense is still impossible.

Next we must add current to historical divergencies. For what count as reasons or the like, say, in law, in mathematics, in the assessment of motives and people, or (the nearest thing to people) works of art? All these, of course, vary indefinitely. We still group them together, as we must; and we group them on something better than some patchwork principle—say, of 'family resemblances' or the like. For concepts, *qua* concepts, are extensible, they must admit of application to new instances. Yet, more important, they are not merely arbitrarily extensible. Even so, we may well be told, a family resemblance must suffice; it is useless to seek general rules. For each new case is to be judged on its merits. By all means. But, we ask,

how are those merits ever to be judged except on the basis of general rules? Only look at the facts. We start with acknowledged examples, and, generalizing, educe salient features; we next set beside them the new 'candidate'—which either sufficiently resembles or fails to resemble the old.

I am not ignoring what philosophers ignore too often—the crucial and central process that Professor Wisdom calls 'reflection'; the process whereby things are turned this way or that, maybe set in a new light—in brief, whereby new aspects emerge. The same holds both of concepts themselves and of instances or would-be instances of concepts. Such reflection derives its authority in many ways; perhaps from the consensus or growing consensus of those who 'reflect'; perhaps from its theoretical consequences. A concept belongs to some system; we may find, with the modification of the former, the power of the latter convincingly enhanced. But all this is ultimately to say no more than that we *judge*; we judge in the Kantian sense, subsuming (or declining to subsume) a given particular under a universal; and, as Kant showed, there can be no rules for judgment. For judgment is the application of rules. If you need further rules to apply them, the process can only be infinite. Grant as much as you please to the process of 'reflection' which shows us familiar things in new ways. The conclusion remains the same; we either count or discount them as true instances of some given universal.

The rational, we saw, is the objective; thinkers who think rationally think alike—at least, unimpeded, and given the same data, they think alike (though, of course, rationality must be understood broadly to include the process of judgment I have already touched on, and even intellectual imagination, too). We oppose the objective to the arbitrary—the arbitrary, that can know of no right or wrong.

Reason, then, presupposes evaluation, the difference of better and worse, of ideal and actual; and unless we are to rest content with arbitrary differences which, if I am right, the very concept forbids, it commits us further to the ideal possibility of non-arbitrary agreement among thinkers—whom it is then only tautological to call 'rational'. It relates to truth, too, inasmuch as approach to true beliefs, both non-accidental and self-authenticating, is and must be, by way of Reason—that is, the non-arbitrary assessments of evidence, observation and the like.

*Qua* non-arbitrary, further, it is bound to reject dogma or mere authority; it thrives chiefly on the process of questioning, which it presses back as far as it will go. Very well, you may say: but what when it reaches its limits, as sooner or later it surely must? If we allow, adapting Wittgenstein, that the process must come to an end,



## *The concept of Reason*

it need not come arbitrarily to an end; a point which we shall need to return to.

## *Publicity and interpersonality*

We saw that objectivity involves publicity, the appeal to interpersonal tests. Rational minds, as I said, think alike. I assume here what I am bound to assume, the existence of minds, like my own, more or less rational, and the further possibility of our mutual contact. I oppose 'rational', of course, only to 'non-rational', not to 'irrational', a very different thing. Irrational people still reason. They reason indeed, but reason badly (their distinguishing feature); or alternatively, refusing to reason, resorting to bare assertion, are probably glad enough when someone else gives a reason or what looks like a reason, for what they themselves had baldly asserted. I see something in one way, you in another; then at least one of us is blind or the other 'seeing things', the victim of an optical illusion.

Now as to ordinary seeing, to seeing with one's eyes, that will hardly be disputed (and here I exclude the 'seeing' of so-called aspects). Secondly, as to the seeing of arguments (a different usage but no less well established): if I see as valid what you see as invalid *mutatis mutandis* the same holds. Of course understanding is limited (which a candid thinker—doubtless a rare creature—will always acknowledge). But where two parties alike claim understanding—that is, understand the same thing—and yet none the less understand it differently (again, where agreeing on the evidence, they draw from it different conclusions) the same consequence still follows. For otherwise all discourse is self-defeating and Fascists and New Leftists (some of their most audible spokesmen at least) would then be right. For violence, on these terms, does better than argument. At least one, to repeat, must be 'blind', which here of course means intellectually blind, or the other intellectually deluded. Reason, we saw, is impersonal; it follows that it is impartial as well. For by 'partiality' we precisely understand the intrusion of irrelevant factors, say private, idiosyncratic associations or more often, private hopes or private fears.

But such factors are potentially endless, besides being endlessly elusive, a point we may dwell on at least momentarily. Mathematics, for instance, is thought of—and rightly, I dare say—as, of all disciplines, the freest from doubt and uncertainty. Yet I think even here a wise mathematician who believed himself, let us not say to have squared the circle, but to have proved something like Gödel's theorem, would give it to a colleague to look over before finally trusting himself. Sometimes, doubtless, genius uncomprehended, a whole

age ahead of its time, must set its face and defy all the world; but let us recall that if genius does so once in ten thousand times, ten thousand madmen do the same thing every day.

The appeal to others is intrinsic to Reason, indeed even to reliable perception. But one must not apply it with a pickaxe. We distinguish between experts and laymen, the former being not only better informed but also trained; and that training is training in judgment, which sometimes causes initially 'obvious' features to recede, as it were, until they seem trivial; and others, all but invisible to the layman, to stand out. But for such disciplines to emerge at all there must also emerge a body of expert opinion—not, of course, indeed necessarily agreeing in detail, but agreeing in at least their terms, so that significant discourse can go forward. Now all this yields a kind of scale; mathematics, perhaps, stands at the top, followed by science, history, art criticism and last, perhaps, by philosophy itself. Doubtless actual universal agreement can never be strictly attained; there will always remain cranks and madmen. But as to mathematics and formal logic (I speak only of particular deductions, not the broader views they presuppose), by and large the following holds: we either admit to incomprehension or else agree. To differ would be not to understand—which, as I say, is just what we hardly find. And presumably where philosophers are fascinated by mathematics and speak of its superior certainty, they mean precisely that; that those who claim to understand also concur. But what they deplore, very intelligibly, is the persistence of actual disagreement joined with equally firm claims to understanding; a phenomenon progressively in evidence as we move down the scale that I sketched. In aesthetics and morals, for instance, men widely and vehemently disagree; a point we are often reminded of—apparently as casting doubt on the disciplines in question. No such judgments, so we gather, can be 'objective'. (Science, the layman is left to suppose, presents a solid front of agreement.) But presumably the argument itself is a philosophical one; hence, one would think, it must undercut itself. By the test to which this same argument appeals, philosophical argument or philosophical judgment has least claim of all to objectivity.

### The validation of reason

At the start I identified reason with a body of given procedures: Theoretical Reason with procedures to which we subject *de facto* material, so as to make it non-arbitrary or intelligible; Practical Reason broadly with procedures aimed at guiding conduct likewise non-arbitrarily, and ultimately in a way acceptable to all rational minds (though we should have to add the appraisal of experience, of

deceive us; they are certainly fallible, but so is our intellect, too. It is not a thing wholly unknown for an invalid argument to pass as a valid one; and even in simple arithmetic I myself can authoritatively report having sometimes 'seen' a wrong answer as right. To fallen humanity infallible faculties are perhaps denied; but their wholesale damnation, on that account, might be thought an excessive severity.

But all this, of course, remains general, totally general; we turn to particular disciplines and meet other and perhaps harder questions. More needs saying—though more, too, that I cannot embark on here. For we find there exists not only science but also pseudoscience, astrology as well as astronomy; codes of conduct exist or have existed, whose effect is to aggravate the sum of actual misery and impoverish the quality and potential of life. Philosophy, then, rightly conceived—I deliberately invert Wittgenstein's saying—is not only descriptive but validatory or justificatory, as it has been traditionally, for instance, for Plato, Descartes, Spinoza and Kant.

### Diversities of 'reasons' and 'explanations'

Reason must, to be counted a real concept, be also a unitary concept; *ens, unum* and *bonum*—here at least the scholastic trilogy seems to make sense. What we face is the simultaneous necessity of doing justice to that unity without falsifying the actual knottiness of the facts. For, of course, spheres of thought are widely various and what we call 'explanations' vary accordingly. As to some would-be simple formula, some few-word definition to cover all of them, the prospects are far from encouraging. Now plainly I cannot hope, even sketchily, to survey the field. I confine myself to two general spheres, widely disparate: explanation of human behaviour and explanation of 'physical events'.<sup>2</sup>

Universality and necessity serve Reason, I said, as obligatory ideals, but only as ideals. By and large generality and likelihood are more attainable; in practice they widely serve instead. An example: if history, as we are told, is so largely a record of crimes, follies and blunders, it is perhaps not wholly for lack of anything else to record. Catastrophies and the like provoke enquiry; we seek to explain a plane crash at Heathrow, but not why the plane before landed safely. Now it is, we say, explained—the common, one would almost call it the central, use of the term 'explanation'—for instance where some faulty part is identified, or some fatal combination of circumstances, weather conditions, engine trouble and so on. In brief, we learn why it happened—which, to repeat, is precisely to explain it—but not, probably, that it was bound to happen, or to happen

little by the way of generalization, far less any appeal to strictly universal laws, would seem to be involved. Perhaps envious people tend to sneer; if so, a pretty rough generalization. But anyway a man can act out of character without his action being wholly inexplicable; or, to take a different possible case: say we know of the act, we know what he did; it remains however to seek an explanation. The best way to learn a man's reason, at least a truthful man, is not to generalize from his behaviour, but to ask. People can explain their own actions, unlike things; I do not ask an apple why it fell—a rather obvious difference, one might think. They can not only tell us; they tell us, where they do, with a special authority. Their account will override other people's. (Of course, there also exists self-deception but that is another matter. In fact self-deception presupposes normal self-knowledge, self-knowledge that is non-deceptive.)

Reason, despite all this, I shall still argue, is implicitly universal. There remain discrepancies, of course; I might act differently from you, though you act for 'good' reasons of your own. Yet merely to see them as reasons, to describe them as such, I in some sense must recognize as reasons whatever you do—as possible reasons, at least. Enquiry, no doubt, might go further; enquiry, after all, can always go further. Having identified the faulty part that caused the crash, we might trace it to the factory that produced it; and ultimately, perhaps, to the nervous strain, derived in turn from a broken marriage, of a certain engineer at his instruments. (Did the man who seduced his wife cause the crash?) Now what of the case of human action? Here, too, we can press back enquiry. To approach nearer a 'full explanation'—which we need not, let me emphasize—then, as Collingwood taught, I must seek to understand another man 'inwardly': that is, to adopt imaginatively his views and feelings, enter his present state of mind. Now imagine what, I suppose, is possible in principle, that such a project were thoroughly realized. In that case the action we started with would ultimately appear as following both predictably and necessarily. And if in practice we must often stop far earlier, are content with the first step, the same, we saw, generally holds of the explanation of 'physical events'.<sup>1</sup>

But what I have spoken of, a 'state of mind', is likely to be something pretty indeterminate. A man's outlook, which we appeal to in explaining his actions, is broadly a system of beliefs and of attitudes involving beliefs—though, it may be, no very systematic system. (Certainly it involves emotions as well; which, I should argue, amounts to this: that some beliefs, so to speak, may be vitalized, charged with energy and proportionately efficacious. These beliefs are naturally likelier both to issue in action and influence others as well. But the theme is one I cannot pursue here.)

I have spoken of reasons for action; but, of course, we also have reasons for beliefs. They require them, at least, and normally, indeed, they must in fact be available. Now the process I have sought to describe will appear at its clearest, if somewhat schematically, if we use examples that in the strictest sense are 'intellectual'. They need be nothing *recondite*, and the process itself is nothing *recondite*. Our concern is with intellectual differences, and let us start, so to speak, further back. One difference will arise out of others. You first accept, then, views that I deliberately reject. But of course I may still thoroughly understand them. Now these, we shall say, entail others; and as to that entailment, too, I need not accept the premise to recognize or follow it, even to accept it. To recognize that *p* implies *q*, I need not myself accept *p*. Finally, as to this last step, the conclusion, I can certainly understand, certainly explain, your acceptance of it (though explanation, as in our other examples, is bound to start somewhere, with something itself unexplained).

Let us recall our previous case, the explanation of a 'physical event': the glass broke because a cricket ball hit it—events joined by a causal generalization. And because you believe *p*, you believe *q*—events, namely beliefs, reflecting propositions joined this time by a logical rule—a different sort of explanation, but just as good. The similarity, besides, is pretty close; we in fact use the same word 'explanation', which we need not think of as a mere ambiguity, or its application as arbitrary. (There exist, too, I perhaps ought to add, more intimate though more obscure *connexions* between the two; I can at present only indicate them. I shall shortly attempt rather more. Imagine some 'physical event' which you give an acceptable explanation of, one, then, which I duly accept. If so, you, in one act, do two things: the one concerning the event itself, the other concerning something very different, my beliefs. For the former you provide an explanation; as to the latter, by hypothesis, you influence them, adducing reasons. And the two, though distinct, are closely related; the mere possibility of the one sort of explanation logically presupposes that of the other.)

My example, I gave warning, would be, in a rather stark sense, 'intellectual'. More often, perhaps, factors influencing beliefs are *relatively indeterminate and largely obscure*. The example none the less has its use; first as one actual case, but also as something of a paradigm, by whose light one might more searchingly look at the rest—though the project is too large for the present occasion. Besides, understanding others' viewpoints will also involve Wisdom's process of 'reflecting'. Thus, as we reflect, emphases will be differently distributed, certain features or analogies ignored, others focused and given more prominence, and much else besides. (I mean only to

recall and indicate the process, without stopping to illustrate it.) I speak of entering into different viewpoints, adopting, hypothetically at least, different attitudes and beliefs. One might still, of course, press enquiry further back. Men differ in temperament and outlook, which of course influence, sometimes determine, their different beliefs. For particular beliefs themselves, to say this is already partly to explain them by tracing them to sources further back; and, through beliefs, actions can be similarly explained. For those further differences, however, we need not rest content with them as merely ultimate. For, of course, differences of background and circumstances, even presumably of heredity—even if our knowledge in this area is as yet limited—influence all these things, and they can throw light on, if not precisely 'explain', such differences of outlook and temperament. In brief we still respond to the pressure of those more stringent requirements of Reason, those ideals I have repeatedly referred to; whether or not the dream I spoke of, the dream of a comprehensive scientific psychology and sociology should ever be realized, or ever could.

I shall not pursue the matter here. I have sought only from a few examples to illustrate my main theme, how Reason, while indeed polymorphous, remains at a certain level unitary.

### Reason and systematization

I have spoken briefly of Reason in two spheres, of the explanation of human behaviour and the explanation of 'physical events'. But, for the latter, I have so far made do with an account that might perhaps fairly be called simplistic; we must briefly glance at scientific explanation, since it involves whole dimensions beyond.

Reason, we said, demands generality, and hence system, comprehensive generality. You explain a particular event as an instance of a kind that falls under an appropriate law, that in turn under others more general; all which leads to larger topics. A broad distinction, useful to work with and safe enough if handled with caution, is between the two spheres of the empirical and the *a priori*; what we know in virtue of experience and what we know independent of experience. The Reason we speak of can usefully be seen in these terms, as the application of the *a priori* to experience. Logical positivists, indeed, went much further. They conceived a world, on the one hand, of unproblematic 'pure experience', sense-data or the like, which gave knowledge of 'facts'; on the other of unproblematic linguistic or symbolic conventions, which yielded truths known *a priori* (the latter do not concern us at present).<sup>4</sup>

The *a priori* that concerns me at present is not that of 'pure' logic

but broadly of the systematization of experience. We order our sense-impressions. We transform kaleidoscopic actuality to educe from it a pattern of perfect order—all but perfect, at least—an order both close and inclusive. It seems a near miracle. And plainly, unless science is to count as mere prestidigitation, we must ask how; indeed we must still ask, even suppose that it were.

An analogy: imagine the following, a flat surface wholly covered with different shapes, circles, triangles, ellipses and so on. The analogue of our project would be this: we seek amidst them for a pattern, a regular order, nothing less, a system of laws—and, of course, not merely by Leibniz's trick which points out that some discoverable mathematical formula will cover any series whatever.

So science must achieve a near miracle; what else can one call it? Let me grant that the process, briefly adumbrated, sounds precisely like a formula for jobbery—I mean, of course, intellectual jobbery. For let me sketch it, distinguishing three main strands. Some given *set of objects first of all—specifically, recalcitrant objects*—are 'interpreted'; they are manipulated after the manner I have already spoken of and thereby made to fit. We set them, I said, in a new light. Thus some features acquire salience, others recede; and in the process new groupings emerge. *New aspects emerge first, and thence there emerges a new order; which is one device, one way of super-inducing regularity on the 'facts', but often presupposes others.* Indeed the second alone may make it possible. We go beyond or 'behind' the mere given, *postulating things not to be observed, 'theoretical' or scientific objects.* The picture now begins to emerge, the pattern to take shape. Phenomena that looked merely disparate appear now, in their new form, as connected, say, as so many appearances of the same submicroscopic entities 'behind' them. Last, the most puzzling of all these processes, perhaps, but by no means the least important; we stretch or expand existing concepts, like garments on a stretcher or human bodies on a rack, not stopping at doing them some violence. Our concept of simultaneity, of space or time, of the track of a 'continuous' particle, have all undergone some such process; so that the court of modern science might pass its verdict.

By these means our project takes shape. We 'redescribe' arbitrariness and call it 'order'; which (a cynic might say) is rather as if you should choose to call a crooked line straight—hence points lying along it 'regularly related'.

Now certainly there exist views of natural science, at different times widely popular and influential, that such considerations may well recall: scientists, they say, describe, not explain, their world as a world they construct and do not discover. Those 'entities' are

theoretical constructs. One sees the point; the plausibility of some such doctrine is almost painfully evident. But suppose we should accept it—to me the full cost seems excessive. The 'construction', like sham architecture, would be *trompe l'œil*; the redescription itself fairly describable as verbal gerrymandering. Yet I remain convinced that the real situation is not so desperate. For the process I have sought to sketch, roughly the manipulation of data, is still emphatically subject to controls; not, indeed, 'rigorous' controls, at least as popularly thought of—inasmuch as we hear much of the 'exact sciences' (those, seemingly, that lay mathematical techniques under heavy contribution as opposed, say, to morals, history or art criticism). The controls in question concern the things we judge of; they exert pressure to bear on us variously and we count them as 'excessive' or 'reasonable'. That 'counting' of course could never be arithmetical or those pressures mathematically measurable (and I mean 'could not'—as logarithms, if you like, 'cannot' be pale blue). The mere notion makes nonsense; literal nonsense, at least—ignoring whatever some voguish modernist poet might chose to do with it.

But the process is not one of mere juggling, yielding so elastic a pattern as to admit the possibility of finding room for anything. I repeat, it emphatically remains subject to controls. Let me recapitulate my three processes. For theoretical entities first: these we invoke at need, certainly, but we cannot invoke them at our mere pleasure, which might solve any problems *ad hoc*. The *ad hoc*, we all know, is always frowned on, or frowned on by serious thinkers; not without reason. It precisely offends against Reason—that is, if my thesis is sound, against the demands of non-arbitrary appraisal. The *ad hoc* is another name for the arbitrary. For theoretical entities, then, the rule is simply, the more powerful the better. For Reason seeks system, we saw; hence nothing that promotes or subserves it can merely be called arbitrary.

Similarly with new concepts, or concepts treated as malleable, tortured out of shape; there exists a conceptual *a priori* which is partly an elastic *a priori*. Take it either way: totally elastic concepts would let us treat anything as anything, and make nonsense of rational enquiry. But consider, conversely, total rigidity. We often face, not only with new theoretical pressures but even observations, that no existing structure can incorporate or accommodate. Mere rigidity, in these circumstances, might bring to a halt the whole labour of construction, or worse, tear apart its foundations. The remoulding of concepts, I conclude, therefore, must justify itself by 'sufficient' theoretical gains elsewhere—or again by the salvation of some sufficient existing body of theory. Lastly I have spoken of new aspects that emerge as we alter our viewpoint, and not only



cannot think and think out of nothing, recreate *ab initio* the whole existing body of human thought. 'I cannot,' as Burke says in another context, 'strike out a new creation at a heat.'

And why not? The alternative is such as I have indicated. 'There,' I say, 'you accept this and this. And now, let me show you, you're cornered. *P* implies *q*, *q* implies *r*; you must accept the other as well.' 'Oh must I?' you answer. 'But recall, logical truths are conventional, they ultimately rest on decision. Now I decide differently. So I needn't.' Perhaps not, but then all argument is futile, there can never be any 'must' in the case. The same goes indeed for any attempt at coherent thought; to argue with oneself would be futile, too. For nothing is obligatory or forbidden; we can always change the rules as we please.

There exist, besides, 'sanctions' governing thought. Say you 'choose' to think incoherently, to violate logic; the sanction is obvious and simple enough; it is error. Very well, but are we obliged to reject error? Perhaps not. But at least those are bound to reject it who accept and use at all the concept of Reason, which is, once again and yet again, of the non-arbitrary assessment of beliefs (their intrinsic assessment, *qua* belief, one must add, not pragmatic, as convenient, for instance—'Those are my principles, and if you don't like them I'll see what I can do about it.'). Suppose, now, that 'truth' is conventional—logical truth, that is. All I need for the convenience of communication is to let my decisions be known; (indeed, I might even break by my own rules—a new decision, off the cuff, so to speak). Interpersonal argument plainly becomes nonsense. In fact we can go further still. Even to test, say, an empirical hypothesis, I deduce what phenomena it yields. But, on the present view, that process of deduction will be subject to no 'sanction' whatever—to nothing it makes sense to call a 'sanction'. We find, therefore, that the collapse of logical truth brings down with it empirical truth, which follows as bound up in its train.

Let us, if we can, probe further into these perplexities. One is tempted to ask how such absurdities—dare I call them?—could first take hold. Logical truths have often been called 'analytic' and, unhappily enough, 'analytic' further equated with 'tautological'. The historical formulation was as follows: that the subject is contained in the predicate; which means that its explicit deduction adds nothing new, or essentially new, but merely spells out what in some sense was already 'there'. Now in what sense 'there'? Perhaps psychologically. 'Implicit' and 'explicit' are notions that seem to belong rather to psychology than logic. But that, of course, cannot concern us. For the rest, as has often been stressed, that participle, 'contained', adds nothing more illuminating than a metaphor. Try

to take it literally; what you get are literal tautologies, condemned very rightly as fatuous, as, for instance, 'a wise white-headed man is white-headed'. When Dryden apostrophized his rival Shadwell as 'Thou last great prophet of tautology', he did not mean to praise him as a formal logician. 'Contained in', psychology apart, is only a metaphor and does nothing to illuminate the concept of implication but only, and obscurely, repeats it.

To turn back, then, to harder cases and more real ones: that  $2 + 2 = 4$  is true, I take it, and necessarily true. It is moreover solely true—the fine nugget of value in the positivist doctrine—in virtue of the meanings of the terms'. For among much else 'two' means precisely this; a number, added to itself, that makes four. But now imagine if possible this: that I none the less deny it—something, however strange you think it, that is certainly intelligibly conceivable. If so what follows?—that I am ignorant, wholly ignorant of what 'two' means or what the other terms in question mean. Surely not. For, after all, that denial may merely reflect a specific block, so to speak, a localized block; this again is surely still imaginable, however strange.<sup>5</sup>

I still know that  $1 + 1 = 2$ , that  $1 + 2 = 3$ ; even, if you like, that  $4 + 1 = 5$ ,  $4 + 2 = 6$  and that  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$ ,  $4 \times \frac{1}{2} = 2$ , that  $4 \times 2 = 8$ , and so on indefinitely. This single, isolated truth, the truth namely that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , is all I am utterly blind to; all I reject or perhaps am incapable of comprehending. But now for what follows—follows, for our purposes, philosophically. It is that we find something separable, that is, in principle separable, and not 'contained' even metaphorically—or the metaphor, if so, must be a wholly unhelpful one—in all the rest; 'the rest' being in the various other truths I am supposed to accept quite unquestioningly. I know those, without knowing this. They are not *contained* in but only *implied* by it (which, of course, is merely a platitude). But philosophy, among much else (as Wisdom taught), can consist in the rediscovery of platitudes, which is also their revivification. For in the process they acquire a new life.

### The normativity of logic

Logical laws govern thought—ideally at least they govern thought, just as moral laws ideally govern action.<sup>6</sup> The fundamental thing to emphasize is this: the laws of thought, traditionally so called, are, after all, laws of thought. The present century saw a movement, however—and one, in its historical setting, not only salutary but essential—to purge logic of so-called psychologism. The statement, say, that *p* implies *q* tells us nothing about anyone's thinking; it

has about it nothing psychological. We should pause here. At some point it must bear on psychology, but bear on it not descriptively but normatively. For suppose I accept it; I both rightly believe that  $p$  (and let  $p$  if you like be a logical truth), and further that  $p$  implies  $q$ . What follows is clear: I am authorized thereby to believe that  $q$ , authorized to contradict anyone who denies it.<sup>7</sup>

We can take the point further, beyond Edgley: suppose people generally are ready to accept invalid arguments as valid ones (which, note, is now to be not merely a normative rule, but a describable possibility). Such a world must be simply unimaginable; thought and Reason lose all application—and the same goes for scepticism, too. I speak, of course, of would-be intelligible scepticism; of scepticism, so far as possible, maintained rationally, not mere silence, which is always unanswerable. For, of course, to maintain anything rationally is to give reasons; the process moreover presupposes that reasons will carry weight. Suppose the opposite. If the chances are even of their being totally worthless, the sceptic—a solipsist perhaps—would be deprived even of a solipsist's privilege of arguing the issue with himself.

With all this we return to our starting point: we must trust our faculties, at least cautiously, to think at all, to philosophize at all—intellectual caution, let us add, itself being such a faculty among others. It is one that wise men have some use for. Recall the opposite view, however. Reason, for Hume, let us remember, is something wholly passive and inert; it stands back, theoretical or contemplative, or at best serves to point means to ends. For it tells us of causal connexions (or does so, at least, in Hume's less sceptical moments). Ends themselves are neither rational nor irrational; I, made as I am and not otherwise, *de facto* desire or dislike things. Hence the well-known Humean paradox, which strictly follows: namely, that 'reason is only, and ought to be, the slave of the passions'. Now the first part of the picture may seem plausible. But that conclusion at least is certainly false. For, we have seen, Reason governs thought; and if thought, why not action as well? In default of its normal authority, thinking, to repeat, would be impossible; and no less impossible, we must add, if we imagine it as wholly inert, universally or normally inefficacious.

Further, we must notice, the term 'belief' itself is an ambiguous one: you and I may *believe* the same *belief*. But my mind is different from yours; my belief, that is, belief *qua* content, or 'what I believe', is the same; *qua* act of believing—though Edgley, who denies the 'will to believe', prefers not to call it an act—is numerically different from yours. At least it is a 'historical' event, an occurrence forming part of my ideally complete biography; no less so than an emotion or

an action. To recall Hume once again: a passion is 'an original existent'. It neither agrees nor yet fails to agree with any possible matter of fact. It lies, then, beyond the purview of Reason; and, on this view, of such actions as it issues in the same holds. But if so, you may go further still. The same holds of beliefs, too, of beliefs at least, as 'historical' occurrences. And what follows? That what you or I now do, or will at some future time, believe, and in general that we believe any one thing rather than another, can never be either rational or irrational.

More broadly our conclusion is this. There is no problem as to how Reason can be practical; *Theoretical Reason* in its own realm, the realm of belief, is, as it were, practical too.

### Reason and truth

We reason to arrive at the truth, which doubtless we might reach by accident. But accidents, by definition, are not things to be relied on; I speak of the kind of course, the kind of option, that it makes sense deliberately to choose. Now reasons are better or worse; we seek to assess, to accept or reject them accordingly. We similarly accept or reject possible or contemptible beliefs. Those we accept that we call 'true', and all others uncertain or false. Truth, then, to follow this approach, is definable as acceptable belief—ideally so doubtless, (for you or I, placed as we are, may always very reasonably accept beliefs that in fact are none the less false). This much is plain, however: the essential question for a serious thinker is precisely 'What ought I to believe?' And that dovetails with the definition I have proposed.

There exists, however, another account, and a highly plausible one, so that I should perhaps in candour confess to some difficulty in deciding between the two.

A feature often noticed, and one, incidentally, that the view outlined above can accommodate comfortably enough, is what may be called the logical superfluity of truth, at least of the adjective 'true'. 'It is true that *p*' (say, 'It is raining') seems to tell us nothing different from '*p*' alone ('It is raining'). Might we not, at least so far as concerns essentials, dispense with the word altogether?—which indeed was Ramsey's suggestion, followed, with some reworking, by Professor Strawson. For the word must, of course, have a function; it could hardly have survived as a mere cipher. Its function, Strawson holds, or used to hold, is broadly to be equated with endorsement; 'That's true' is an utterance like 'Hear, hear!'. It endorses what another speaker has said. Now that account as it stands is inadequate; it may, however, admit of modification. There

exist questions, suppositions and so on, as well as statements. One can ask 'Is it true?' as well as say so, which would hardly count as endorsement. But the theory needs stretching, not scrapping; or, so I gather, Strawson now holds. '*P* is true' says no more or less than '*p*'. 'Is *p* true?' asks the same question as '*p*?' ('Is it true that it's raining?' asks just the same question as 'Is it raining?') Strictly speaking, no doubt, the question is no endorsement, but the function of 'true' remains similar. It serves to indicate that the point has been already raised; the ball, so to speak, is in play.

One must insist on the unity of 'truth'—not as a *credo* of metaphysic monism but as a point of linguistic analysis. We have truths of science, of logic, of law, history and so on indefinitely. If 'true' means something different in every case the term becomes bewilderingly ambiguous, and would better be scrapped for a score of others. Suppose, then, that one Professor Neo-Chumless initiates some wholly new science. He seeks in it then: but on this view it must follow, not for 'truths', as in old sciences. But surely he does seek, but what for is not easy to say. Strawson has rightly distinguished between the meaning of that word itself, of 'true', in whatever terms we analyse it, and again something very different, namely, considerations to which we properly appeal so as to establish particular truths. These latter vary indefinitely from field to field. (The same holds of 'probable' and 'possible'.) One might even speak, with so many philosophical authorities, of truth as 'correspondence to the facts', except that the two terms sound so very like synonyms. (Thus the truth, say, that the unemployment rate is rising, seems hard to distinguish from 'the fact that . . .'.) Stick to single, observable things, categorical not hypothetical, positive not negative—for instance that the cat is on the mat; some meaning may be given it. But as to the 'fact'—the truth, in other words—that iron expands if you heat it—that, I take it, is a spurious entity, and its correspondence to the true proposition a merely factitious relation.

Strawson's account, I repeat, is one I find eminently plausible. It seems, however, to do better for the adjective than the noun, for 'true' than for 'truth'. Philosophers who used to describe themselves—and some still do for all I know—as 'earnest seekers after truth' were not, certainly, seekers after endorsement. I dare say, with some artificiality, some manoeuvring, the case might be met. Some issue, a large issue, probably, is at stake; to save Strawson's account we can foist on them certain propositions, doubtless pretty indeterminate as yet. Now if so, we shall go on to say, those are what they seek to endorse or reject. It remains, as I said, artificial. Suppose that they barely can formulate them; suppose they seek truth, precisely as some attainable determinateness in this sphere as yet indeterminate. The

Wittgensteinians; nor can Wittgenstein here, as it were neutrally, above the battle, merely 'describe'.

But return to those 'rock-bottom' practices or, as I myself would rather call them, beliefs. I myself, then, believe in material objects; Moore 'knew' that he, Moore, had two hands. But Wittgenstein, in cases like these, will talk neither of knowledge nor belief (and hence not of 'true belief' either). For what can it amount to, or what could be the function of such utterances, or again what could it be for someone to question them? At most, then, I dig in my heels, I declare my commitments, which are ultimate. Or verbally, 'Hier steh' ich', I might say, like Luther. In other words, I take my stand here. And that is true, so do I. But not that I know. It is a commitment, then, that helps define my form of life, that here and not elsewhere is my stopping point. The reality of such things as hands and trees is, for me at least, not arguable, not an open question. A further consequence; I myself do, to repeat, take my stand here; others may not, and even do not. I can know it and recognize it. Yet no contradiction appears. This commitment, I said, defines my own form of life, though others remain wholly conceivable, and no utterance that might serve to express either is such as can be called 'true' or 'false'. The two positions indeed stand opposed but, we must stress, not logically opposed, not opposed as mutually contradictory.

Take by contrast an ordinary statement, not an utterance like those recording commitment, the statement, say, 'He has thin hands'. Now here, of course, everything changes: a man can certainly doubt or discover it; he can also quite conceivably be mistaken. Lastly, suppose you deny it; you may deny what I assert. Then indeed we do simply contradict each other. Your views can change, and so can mine. Could my radical commitments change, too? Yes, in a way they surely could. There do occur fundamental changes, some of which we speak of as 'conversions', and other changes still stranger. Let us, if we can, imagine a situation in which at least in some sense I doubt the reality of my own hands (perhaps a sort of punishment in fantasy for the fantasy of some criminal act, so that I cannot bear to contemplate my guilty hands). Then, Wittgenstein says, one would be less apt to call oneself *mistaken*, as we may of our ordinary beliefs, than to wonder if one had not suddenly gone mad. For if such 'belief' goes, what remains? My whole world of beliefs is subverted.

But, I said, other forms of life remain imaginable; and we need, therefore, to make some effort to imagine them—though, for my first example, it must, I fear, remain partly problematic. But it is this. Consider the possible utterance of a mystic: 'This world is the shadow of an illusion, its objects, the dream of a dream'; for him only 'Eternity' is real. Moore might 'know', might say that he knew,

of the reality of things like hands. But to repeat, there is no contradiction; beyond question the two commitments are *incompatible*. In their way they emphatically conflict. But neither is something expressible in the form of what we should call a 'statement', since statements are, or can be, true or false. So far so good. But recall that other, humbler utterance, the workaday utterance we noticed, 'He has thin hands'. In saying so, no doubt, I presuppose my own commitments; yet, even following Wittgenstein, I can call it true. But what of our imaginary mystic? His commitment would appear to involve this, that such an utterance can be *neither true nor false*. Material things are illusory; nothing, truly or falsely, can be said of them. We find that the contradiction is, so to speak, only driven back, not miraculously conjured out of existence. At the next bend, it would seem, it reappears.

The case, however, may be felt to be a puzzling one; what, you may ask, are we meant to make of such a commitment, or would-be commitment? For the test must be *doing*, not *saying*. One verbally professes what one will. So long as one eats and drinks, however abstemiously, or kneels and rises, one can evince nothing to count as 'disbelief'—no matter how firmly fenced with inverted commas—in material things. A strange outcome: there was no real alternative after all. But, I suggest, the right answer is simply to remove the inverted commas; the belief is what it seemed, a belief.

We can vary our example, however. Another may circumvent these particular difficulties, besides perhaps proving less esoteric and remote and hence, I hope, easier to handle. Imagine then, this philosophical utterance: 'Aesthetic "judgments" are not really judgments, they only express preferences, that is to say, preferences of a special sort'—a sort of utterance most of us, perhaps with rather weary ears, may recall having heard from time to time. Doubtless philosophers' statements, those issued in his professional capacity, need not always, any more than a barrister's, be taken at face value. But we need not stop with a mere statement. Imagine someone who says it and means it, and shows in all his conduct that he means it (not, I think, an inconceivable 'form of life'). Now, however, add the following statement, one which I should myself subscribe to: 'Shakespeare is the greatest master of "mixed metaphor"—that is, of what in any other poet we condemn as "*mixed metaphor*"—though he incredibly and almost infallibly gets away with it'. It is true, or so I myself hold; but the aesthetic non-cognitivist or sceptic must dismiss it as neither true nor false. Such utterances express no judgment at all. Once again the contradiction is not really eliminated, merely pushed underground; it still re-emerges to confront us and look like itself.

I cannot end without a kind of correction to what, if nothing else, my tone may have suggested or implied. My over-ambitious title may have carried the same suggestion, as may the briskness of this survey of so bewildering a range of issues both intricate and profoundly problematic. The Reason I may seem to have been commending so wholeheartedly, understood as so-called intellectuality, may prove a false idol to worship. Only immature minds shrink from commonplace truths, the old and familiar truths of time. Things grow in the dark and in silence. So that in others and in ourselves—in children, I think, most of all—we must accept obscure processes, and processes we do not understand; not only accept but most of all seek to foster them. I can think of no deadlier educational plan, for example, than the imposition of such 'rationality' as becomes a kind of grid, prematurely and rigidly laid down, perhaps on early confused enthusiasms, or again on the groping shoots of apprehension and response, as yet inarticulate. 'Negative capability', in Keats's phrase—without restless reaching after Reason—is intrinsic to wisdom and patience; one might call it metaphorically the slow sap of wisdom. Another platitudinous truth: a great part of learning consists in learning to live, not with certainty, but with vacancy and possibility, whence a great capacity, and one not easy to teach or learn, the capacity to wait, to leave alone; to give root-room to underground workings. It is to those, to their potential flowering or promised crop that this bright insecticide, preter-lucid 'rationality', meant only for pests, so often proves a blight, sterile and fatal.

There exist powers, or so Wordsworth tells us, that impress our minds of themselves; our minds which (this at least we should believe, surely) we sometimes can best feed in what he calls, with his characteristic quaint profundity, 'a wise passiveness'.

## Notes

- 1 One notorious snag in all philosophizing, none the easier for its lamentable familiarity: our problems universally interlock. And if we can illuminate none of them without first laying bare all the rest, it follows that we shall never begin. So I here simply by-pass the so-called 'other minds' problem. For Wittgensteinians anyway, of course, this would be our starting point; rational man is also social from the start. As to that view, I have criticized it elsewhere (indeed drawing largely on the notable chapter in Professor Bennett's book *Kant's Analytic*; though I felt bound to reject his own alternative solution as well). Cf. *op. cit.*, sect. 51, and my own 'The Notion of Logical Privacy', in *Critica*, 25, 1968.



THE respected dictum 'Man is a rational animal' has by now acquired an old-fashioned air. For one thing we are no longer such pious Aristotelians as to suppose that one species of animal or vegetable is distinguished from all the other species of the genus by some single and simple differentiating property. Nature does not kowtow to the canons of definition *per genus et differentiam*.

For another thing we are accustomed to think of rationality as an excellence, as farsightedness, strength and loyalty are excellences. So just as it would strike us as absurd to say that all men are farsighted or all men are strong or loyal, it strikes us as absurd to say that all men are rational. All men cannot excel. For some men to be picked out as tall or witty, they must be picked out from the ruck of men who are not tall or witty; and if being rational is being exceptionally good at something or other, then not all men or even most men can be exceptionally good at this, any more than all men or even most men can be giants or dwarfs or champion boxers. A scale must have a middle and a foot, else it cannot have a top. Moreover, for quite other reasons, we have lost optimism about the prevalence in the world and the influence of this special excellence of rationality. Apart from the fact that it could not be deserved by all of us, the testimonial seems to be undeserved by any of us.

Of course, when we half-assented to the dictum 'Man is a rational animal', we were not or should not have been using the notion of rationality as a testimonial-notion. What we had or should have had in mind is that there is a special task or craft or calling, or more likely a family of tasks, crafts or callings at which men, unlike other animals, can be *either good or bad or moderate*. It is a peculiarity of men that they can sometimes succeed, but it is also their peculiarity that they can sometimes fail in certain undertakings in which other animals not only cannot succeed, but cannot even fail. They cannot compete at all, and therefore not even unsuccessfully. A lion not only cannot be good, he cannot even be bad at reasoning, and an infant or an idiot not only cannot argue logically, he cannot even argue illogically. He cannot argue at all, and so gets neither good nor bad

### *A rational animal*

marks for his arguments, since these do not exist. We might inject an hygienic astringency into the original respected dictum by saying that there are certain important stupidities and sillinesses of which only men can ever be found guilty, and *therefore of which only men can ever be found not guilty*. The only animal that is *either irrational or rational is man*.

So now let us turn to the question what the thing is or, more circumspectly, what the things are at which it is peculiar to men to be either good or bad or indifferent, the peculiarity, indeed, which even men do not possess when they are infantile or senile, when out of their minds or asleep or fuddled or in a panic.

Inheritance of the Academy's veneration for geometry may lead some of us to reply to this question that what is peculiar to us rational animals is that we can ratiocinate, in the very special sense that we can construct proofs of theorems or at least follow and concur in other people's proofs of them; we are all, though in embarrassingly different degrees, village Euclids. If we do put forward this very specific answer, most of us do so, probably, with somewhat uneasy consciences, because rigorous demonstrations have been outside our ken since our schooldays. We never produce them and we never meet them, unless we reverently consult the authorized repositories of them. So probably we would wish to liberalize our answer and say, less exactly, that it is peculiar to human beings to be able, in some degree, to give and to recognize reasons, good or bad, for propositions, to think, that is, the pros and cons of thoughts; or that we are able, in low or high degree, to do this and also to advance, legitimately or illegitimately, from accepted or considered propositions to new propositions, that is, to make good or bad inferences.

At this point, however, we feel or should feel the rumblings of an internal mutiny. However pivotal it may be to the notion of a proper human being that he has some capacity, however slight, to produce and follow proofs of propositions; or to give and accept reasons for propositions; or to draw and concur in inferences from propositions to propositions; still surely it is not only for his puny, modest or glorious accomplishments in this dry and chilly propositional arena that we grade his life as a man's life as distinct from a brute's life, an infant's life or an idiot's life. We feel dimly, but deeply, and surely correctly, that human beings merit their bad, medium or good marks for other things than only those in which schoolmasters are professionally interested. The human nature that we have so far demarcated from sub-human nature seems to be a one-sidedly Academic human nature. Surely men differ from lions and infants in being liable to sillinesses, stupidities and wrong-headednesses other than

scholastic ones, and in being capable of being judicious in other ways than judicial ways. It is in his actions as well as in his calculations and ratiocinations that a man, unlike a lion or an infant, can be rash or circumspect, original or hackneyed, careless or careful. In his feelings and reactions also he, but not the lion, may be or avoid being petty, impatient and malicious. It may by now be unidiomatic to stigmatize someone as 'irrational' for being peevish, obstinate or sentimental, but epithets like 'foolish', 'silly' and 'stupid' come quite naturally to our lips. Nor do we await the results of any examinations or intelligence tests before coming out with such verdicts. We can esteem a man highly for his fair-mindedness or calmness without wanting to know anything at all about his powers of ratiocination, just as, in the other direction, we can think highly of his theorizing or his forensic powers, while still reserving judgment about his tact, his temper or his sportiness.

At this point we feel some temptation to say, with august precedents to give us the courage to say it, that the Reason which distinguishes us who possess it from the brutes, infants and idiots that lack it is a dual Faculty. There is Theoretical Reason and there is Practical Reason. Theoretical Reason is our capacity, small or great, to think thoughts, that is, to operate from and with propositions. Practical Reason is our capacity, small or great, to conduct ourselves according to moral principles in the warm world of action, and, therewith, our capacity also to feel the proper feelings towards the inhabitants and the furniture of this world. Only a creature possessed of Practical Reason can either cheat or play fair, either desert or keep the ranks; but also only a creature with Practical Reason can feel contemptuous or emulous, proud or ashamed, guilty or guiltless. Whether this Faculty of Practical Reason is to be thought of as the brother-officer of Theoretical Reason or as its sergeant-major is a question the interest of which has, by our demythologizing time, somewhat dwindled, without altogether disappearing. For we are now nearly, though not quite, immune from the temptation to picture our different abilities and liabilities as internal agencies or therefore as superior or subordinate agencies. My sense of humour is my capacity to make jokes; it is not an agent in my insides which makes my jokes for me. It is not, therefore, an agent which takes orders from or gives orders to my Reason or my Sense of Decorum.

But before embarking on what survives of this mythological question about the relative army-ranks of Theoretical and Practical Reason, we need to ask ourselves whether we have yet been open-handed enough. Is it enough to say that man is, *in posse*, not merely something of a village Euclid, but also something of a village Hamp-

den, a weak or strong candidate not only for intellectual, but also for moral honours? For there are plenty of human talents other than theoretical talents, which can be educated, miseducated and neglected; and there are plenty of tastes and scruples other than moral tastes and scruples into which the human adolescent can be growing up. For example, unlike a lion or an infant, a man can have a good or a poor sense of humour; yet a poor sense of humour is neither a moral vice or weakness nor yet an intellectual failing. A lion, unlike a man, neither respects nor flouts technical standards of craftsmanship; it is neither an artist nor a philistine; it is neither tactless nor tactful, courteous nor brusque; it has neither a good nor a bad head for business; it is neither a good nor a bad player of tennis or chess or hide-and-seek; it is neither sentimental nor unsentimental nor cynical. There are hosts of kinds of faults and failings other than intellectual or moral faults and failings, of which only human beings can be accused or acquitted. Merely to split Reason into Theoretical and Practical Reason is to leave unattached lots and lots of our familiar and interesting contributions to daily life which are peculiar to us rational animals. Ought we not, in order to reinforce Theoretical and Practical Reason, also to invoke artistic Reason, conversational Reason, commercial Reason, strategic Reason and sporting Reason?

A little while ago we felt mutinous against the traditional dictum, which seemed to identify what is peculiar to human nature with too narrow a range of qualities, namely, with certain academic qualities. But now, I expect, we begin to feel uneasy with the opposite idea which seems to identify it with too wide a range. It then seemed over-stingy to say that man is an animal that can cope with propositions. Now, I expect, it seems unpromisingly hospitable to say just that man is an animal that can do and feel all the things that man can, and the other animals cannot. So we should try now to see whether there is not some common thread that runs through all the various actions, efforts, reactions and feelings which need to be classified as peculiar to human nature, irrespective of whether these are to be sub-classified as intellectual or moral or artistic or conversational or commercial or sporting, and so on indefinitely. Let us try this approach. We might say, not without risk of grave misunderstanding, that, in the most hospitable possible sense of the word, it is Thought that is peculiar to the human animal, and that it is only because he  
can and does think that he can and does play competitive games, see jokes, act parts, make music, strike bargains, curb his irritation or impatience, play fairly, behave decorously and so on. That he acts or reacts in any of these ways entails that he thinks. We can fight off the old menace of describing human nature in unwarrantably

academic terms by saying that the thinking that is involved in these actions and reactions need not be scholastically trained thinking, perhaps need not even be propositional thinking. The child who can find fault with the singing of a song or can resent an undeserved scolding need not be able to formulate his protests, much less be able to defend them against objections. Still he apprehends that the song has been mis-sung or that he has been scolded for doing something which he did not do, and this apprehending must be classified as belonging to thinking. For it could be misapprehension, and misapprehension is thinking something to be the case which is not the case. A creature which cannot think cannot misapprehend or, therefore, correctly apprehend either. The thinking of the child when he invents a new stratagem in hide-and-seek, or when he chuckles at a practical joke, may well be quite unarticulated and unschooled thinking, but 'thinking' it must be called if we are to be able to say that the stratagem was a stupid one or that what he chuckled at was not the practical joke that he took it to be, but a hostile or careless act.

How must we suppose that the thinking of such unschooled, prepropositional thoughts enters into the performance of even such nursery actions and into the having of even such nursery feelings? When we say, as we must say, that a creature or an infant that cannot think cannot do such things as resent an undeserved scolding or test a new stratagem in hide-and-seek, what kind of dependence have we in mind?

One answer comes all too quickly to our lips, namely the 'cause-effect' answer. The resenting or the inventing depends on the thinking as the freezing of a pond depends on the falling of the temperature of the water. The thinking is a causal condition and presumably a causal precursor or inaugurator of the resenting or the experimenting. Our inference from the child's experiment or resentment to his thinking the requisite thought is a diagnostic inference. 'Here are the symptoms, so *there* there must have been the cause.' The child must first have been thinking a thought and then—and therefore—gone on to feel the resentment or to test his new stratagem. 'First came the flash of lightning and then—and therefore—there occurred the rumble of thunder.'

Unfortunately, or rather fortunately, this captivating cause-effect answer leads to immediate troubles. By what systematic or unsystematic sequences of observations and experiments did we discover, or could we have discovered, that human beings never or hardly ever resent things, find things funny, test things, or even come out with significant and pertinent remarks save when they have, very, very shortly beforehand, or even at the same time, been enter-

taining the requisite thought? By what experiments did we establish the causal law that lions, infants and idiots never do the antecedent or concomitant thinking of thoughts, without which their behaviour cannot rank as either prudent or imprudent, careful or careless, conceited or modest, non-conformist or conformist? Did we first find them not thinking these thoughts, and therefore conclude that their conduct did not qualify for these epithets? How did we find them not thinking these thoughts? How indeed, did we find the child, or our own selves, thinking them? Worse still. The doctor can describe in its own right and in observational terms that haemorrhage or that sprain to which he infers from these visible or palpable external symptoms, just as we can give its own description in observational terms to that lightning-flash of which this rumble of thunder is the effect. But in what sort of terms, even, are we to describe those postulated prefatory or concomitant thinkings of apparently unformulated thoughts which are supposed to trigger off all our specifically human actions and reactions? In real life we have no general difficulty in recognizing another person's utterance as a legitimate complaint or as a pertinent query, and this recognition does not in real life await the confirmation of any diagnostic hypothesis. Yet according to the cause-effect theory, we ought to remain quite unsure what, if anything, the utterance was an expression of until we had tracked its causation back to a prior or collateral cogitative occurrence, to which, unfortunately, we outsiders are forbidden access, and for the characterization of which we and he lack even a vocabulary.

In our own case we are, in normal circumstances, perfectly ready to tell others or ourselves what we did, why we did it and what was the situation, actual or supposed, in which we did it; or we are perfectly ready to tell how we felt, about what and with what justification or seeming justification. The action or feeling so readily described was indeed that of a thinking being. An action or feeling of that description could not have been a passage in the life of a lion, an infant or an idiot, or even, sometimes, in the life of a man who had been without our special training, history or interests. But still the mention of the postulated previous or synchronous occurrence of a separate act or process of thinking a thought seems to be no natural, necessary or even possible ingredient in what we so readily and usually satisfactorily divulge about what we did or felt and why we did or felt it. I have no difficulty in telling you what amused me, but in telling you this I do not recount a story of the pattern 'I began by having the thought that so-and-so, and then a tickled feeling came over me and then a chuckle issued from me.' Rather, in telling you what I was amused at or what I chuckled at, I am already telling

you the thought without which I should not have been amused. My thought or apprehension of the ridiculous incident was not the cause of my being amused. It was partly constitutive of it, somewhat as the heads-side of a penny is indeed part of what makes it the penny that it is, and yet is obviously not a separately existing agency that causes the penny to be the penny that it is.

To describe someone as laughing at a ridiculous incident is, of course, to say more than just that he made a laughing noise. It is to say that he laughed in appreciation, or perhaps misappreciation of the quality of the incident. But this does not require, indeed it does not permit us to say that there took place in him, first an emotionless, spectator's appreciation of a situation, and second, somehow triggered off by this detached and contemplative appreciation, a spasm of a feeling and the expulsion of a laughing noise. More nearly it is to say just that he appreciated—gleefully appreciated—the ridiculous incident; or just that he found the incident funny. Certainly he could not have found it funny if he had not got adequately developed wits; and he would not have found it funny if, owing to panic, absence of mind, preoccupation, inebriation or sleep, he had not been using those wits. His being intelligently alive to the ridiculous incident, his feeling of amusement and his laughter, though not independent parts, are indeed distinguishable features of that single momentary passage in his life. For particular purposes they can be given separate mentions or emphases, as can the profile, complexion and expression of his face. But just as the separately mentionable characteristics of his face are not parts of it, or therefore separable parts of it, so his intelligent appreciation of the ridiculous incident, his feeling tickled and his laughing are not parts or therefore separately occurring parts of his amusement at the incident.

Nor does the anxious mother first dispassionately consider an unformulated truth about her child's illness and then go on to have a feeling of anxiety and then go on to wring her hands. She thinks anxiously, and she is anxious enough to keep on thinking about her child, and to think little of other things, unless as things connected with and coloured by her child's danger.

It must be confessed that we do sometimes picture a person's waking life as a description-baffling procession of passionless and unexecutive acknowledgments of unarticulated truths or falsehoods triggering off actions, emotions, gestures, smiles, shudders and losses of appetite. We picture his life so when we look at it through the blinkers of certain epistemologies. So much the worse for those blinkers. But what is it that not only persuades us to put on these blinkers but even gets us to feel at home in them? It is, I think, this.

Besides and in sharp contrast with this very hospitable *notion of thinking*, as that using or misusing of our wits which is internal to or constitutive of all our specifically human actions and reactions, we have another very specific, almost professional, *notion of thinking*, namely as the reflecting that is done by the Thinker as distinct from the Agent, the thinking that deservedly ranks as, in high or low degree, *theoretical thinking*. Here we can speak, intelligibly enough, of the thinking of thoughts in some detachment from the momentary practical tasks or concerns of the thinker. This reflecting can be very crudely described as operating from and with propositions; and the thinking of these thoughts has indeed a certain chilly disengagement from the urgencies of the moment, as well as a certain impersonality. My theoretical problem or answer today might be your theoretical problem or answer tomorrow or last year. Human rationality has here separate and, if you like, genuinely academic objectives and chores of its own, objectives and chores in which the Greeks could with justice say that barbarians, being totally unschooled, could not participate. To put an edge on this contrast: on the one hand we should certainly wish to say that the tennis-player is, in the hospitable sense of the verb, *thinking*, since he is attending to the game, and applying or misapplying to fresh contingencies lessons that he has learned. Not only his long-term strategies but also his *momentary movements* can be *politic and cunning* or stupid and ill-judged. All the time he is estimating and mis-estimating things. His using his wits and his playing the game are one single occupation, not two rival occupations, or even two allied occupations. On the other hand, in the special, semi-professional sense of the verb, he must stop playing if he wants to think, i.e. to reflect, and he must stop reflecting if he wants to play tennis. If he is reflecting about some intellectual problem, even a problem about tennis, he is not then and there giving his mind to his game. If he is engaged in the one activity, then he is wholly or partly disengaged from the other. They are rival occupations. It is by this special family of distinctively intellectual operations that the notion of Reason has traditionally been monopolized.

This, I suggest, is why, when we find it necessary to say that, for example, tennis-playing involves thinking, namely thinking what to do and how to do it, we feel ourselves forced to say, what in our hearts we know to be false, that the activity of playing tennis has got to be a rapid procession of momentary and unrecorded intellectual or theorizing operations triggering off the several muscular movements. For unwittingly we have identified all exercises of our wits with a very special class of them, namely with certain special exercises of our academically trained and academically motivated



wits; so we have had to postulate the occurrence of unrecorded quasi-propositional operations to explain, in a cause-effect way, what it was that enabled, say, the tennis-player to anticipate his opponent's return; or enabled the child to appreciate a joke or try out a new stratagem in hide-and-seek. For we argued with apparent but unreal cogency that since he was thinking, he must have done, with fearsome celerity, a bit of what the theorist does, namely reflecting. Finding ourselves under pressure to pick out that feature of a person's actions and reactions which constitutes his giving his mind to them, we naturally but unprofitably skidded into identifying this feature with some accredited variety of intellectual operation, some recordable, though unrecorded stroke of theorizing. We assumed, quite wrongly, that what takes a bit of intelligence must incorporate a bit of intellectual work; that for an act or feeling to be that of a more or less reasonable man it would have to trot in tandem behind an unacknowledged act of ratiocination; or that to think what one is doing or saying, one must perform, like lightning, a bit of thinking and then pass on to a bit of doing or saying.

So now we need to confront, face to face, this distinction between, on the one hand, the perfectly general notion of thought, as what is partly constitutive of all specifically human actions and reactions, and, on the other hand, the quite special and almost professional notion of thought, as a separate, self-moving and self-piloting activity of reflection, requiring some specialist training and governed by standards of its own. What are the differences and what are the connexions between intelligent conduct in general and intellectual operations in particular? Between being a bit intelligent and doing a bit of reflecting or theorizing? In asking this question I am, I think, asking—but not asking only—how are Theoretical Reason and Practical Reason related?

Before tackling this problem directly, we need to make a perfectly general preliminary clarification. Whether we are considering the case of a child momentarily perplexed by a practical joke, or the case of a tennis-player momentarily hesitating between one movement and other, or the case of an historian at a loss for an explanation of some historical event, in describing him as thinking we are describing him as wondering, as *trying* to solve his practical or theoretical problem. He is pondering, undecided, unsettled. He is in a state of search, and very often, though not always, in a state of bafflement, that is, of not yet knowing what to do in order to solve his problem. For example, when conversing with a foreigner in his own language, I may be frequently trying, and sometimes trying in vain, to make out what he means; and trying also, and perhaps in

vain, to put into words of his language the things that I want to say to him. Often, too, I may have to try, maybe in vain, to frame a reply which will not offend or embarrass a person of his nationality. Now contrast with this my normal situation in conversing with my own friends. Here, most of the time, though not quite all of the time, I have not merely no great difficulties, but *no difficulties at all* in understanding what they say or in making myself understood by them; and I have to take not merely no great pains, but no pains at all to avoid wounding their susceptibilities. *Certainly I am attending to what they say, and my replies are appropriate and unmechanical. I am alert and not absent-minded, asleep or distrait. But I do not, most of the time, wonder at all what they mean or what I am to say. I am not in a state of search or bafflement. I am using, but I am not taxing my conversational wits. I am conversing adequately, perhaps even well, but I am not trying to do so, and a fortiori I am not trying in vain to do so. Naturally such unhesitant, unobstructed, fluent conversing presupposes a prior mastery of conversational English and a prior familiarity with my interlocutors. Once I did have to study English, and to study the ways and foibles of my friends. But now that I have learned, I can converse with them, most of the time, not merely with very little effort but with no effort at all. I succeed in exchanging ideas with them without any present studying. Of course this agreeable and untaxing situation ceases to obtain the moment the conversation turns towards embarrassing topics, or the moment the circle is joined by a hot-gospeller or by an acquaintance in deep mourning.*

To generalize this point. Not all successes are preceded by attempts; not all findings are preceded by searches; not all gettings are preceded by labours. In all fields, from the nursery to the laboratory, more or less painfully acquired capacities can develop into absolute facilities, so that the exercises of these capacities are at last, though only in normally propitious circumstances, totally unhesitant, totally unperplexed and totally unlaborious. *Some things which earlier had been slightly or very difficult are now so completely easy that we do not trouble to describe them as even easy. Some things which earlier had been obscure or strange are now so completely obvious that we do not trouble to describe them as even obvious, any more than I would ordinarily trouble to describe as 'quite light' the match or the pin that I pick up from the floor. Of course, the fact that something, say walking down familiar stairs, is now completely easy does not involve that we never stumble; the fact that its meaning is or seems perfectly obvious does not involve that we never misunderstand a friend's remark. Total unlaboriousness does not entail impeccability. Theorists who enjoy inventing Faculties sometimes*

use the grand word 'intuition' to cover certain of our totally un-laborious gettings. They are then troubled by the occurrence of the occasional stumbles and misunderstandings against which their fine new Faculty ought to be proof.

Certainly, I should not yet have acquired complete facility in anything if the risk of going wrong was still a serious one. A thing cannot yet be or seem quite obvious to me if repeated sad experiences have forced me to continue to be on my guard against being mistaken about such things. If, for example, from my hardness of hearing or from the similarity of their voices, I could not safely distinguish the voice of one of my friends from that of another, then it would not be or seem obvious to me that a heard voice belonged to one and not to the other. On the other hand, the fact that I can tell one friend from another by his voice, without any effort or dubiety, does not exclude the possibility that very occasionally I get them wrong. Facility involves predominant, but not exceptionless success.

Thinking, wondering, pondering, puzzlement, bafflement and effort belong to the level below that of perfect facility. I am thinking when I am trying to make out whose voice it is; but I am not thinking or wondering when I unhesitatingly recognize or, very occasionally, misrecognize it, any more than I am searching for the moon when I see it shining in the sky above my head. None the less, just as I am using my eyes when I see the moon, though I did not have to peer or scan with them first, so I am using my wits when I recognize a friend's voice, though I did not have to start by doing any wondering, surmising or speculating with them. If I had been deranged or panic-stricken or distraught or fuddled, I should not have recognized the voice.

The man who sees a joke straight off is using, but not exerting, his wits. He does not try to see it, since he does not need to try. The man who has to try, and perhaps tries in vain to see a joke, is thinking or wondering. Both seeing the joke without hesitation or effort, and trying to see it, i.e. thinking it over, exemplify intelligence or, if you like, rationality, in the most hospitable sense of the words. But it is the former, not the latter which exemplifies it at its best. For to ponder is to be still unsuccessful, and to have to ponder is to fall short of complete facility. But still, effortless gettings and accomplishments presuppose the prior occurrence of effortful gettings and effortful accomplishments. Facility now is the harvest of difficulty then. The qualities of a man's wits are shown both by his effortless gettings and accomplishments and by his effortful gettings or missings, accomplishments or failures. But it is the latter which have made the former possible. If I can now very often detect misprints at a glance,

### *A rational animal*

it is only because in childhood I industriously and interestedly struggled with the recalcitrant mysteries of spelling.

In short, if a person has, without the slightest difficulty or hesitation, seen a joke or a misprint, then it is true of him that he has used his wits, yet false that he has been wondering or pondering. He has found something without having to rummage for it.

Now we can return to our big residual problem. How is the way in which all specifically human actions and reactions require thought or rationality, i.e. the use or misuse of at least partially trained wits, related to the way in which certain, rather special and even specialist activities of reflecting belong to some men at some times only, namely at the times when we describe them as occupied in thinking as contrasted with doing? Is there a smooth line of development from the child who chuckles at a practical joke, or from the tennis-player who anticipates his opponent's return to the historian, say, who tries, perhaps successfully, to find the explanation of an historical incident, or to the scientist who tries, perhaps successfully, to rigorize the Mendelian genetic theory? Is theorizing just a much more highly advanced stage of that of which, say, resenting an undeserved scolding is a very primitive stage? Is the child who tries out a new stratagem in hide-and-seek already a nursery-Newton?

I am going to argue that the line is not a smooth line, and so that there is more than a mere increase in complexity between the problems which we solve or try to solve, say, in the nursery or on the football field, and those which we solve or try to solve in our capacity of scientists, historians, economists, scholars, philosophers, etc.; or even those which we solve or try to solve in our capacity of school-boys studying arithmetic, translation, geography or essay-writing. But I shall not, of course, be maintaining that there was a day in everyone's life, or even that it makes sense to say that there was such a day, when he was promoted, or promoted himself from the ranks of those who just have intelligence and use it to the rank of those who have and use their Intellect or their Faculty of Theoretical Reason.

The entirely general notion of thought that we have been considering is that of, for example, the thinking what to do or how to do it of the person who is trying to win his game of tennis, or trying to converse with a foreigner. His problem is, in a wide sense, a practical, though not a moral problem, and his successful solution of it is his success in the game or the conversation. His thinking is, as we have seen, not a precursor of or a preparatory step towards his doing what he wants to do; it is an element, and an essential element in his trying to do it. It is not a separately reportable stretch of an autonomous activity; it is a constitutive feature of his successful

or unsuccessful tennis-playing or conversing. It just is the fact that he is trying intelligently, or, quite often, succeeding without having to try. He does not have one motive for thinking what to do and another motive for doing the thing; nor is he the victim of a division between two occupations, one the playing or the conversing and the other the thinking how to play or converse. He has, at this stage, no interest in the problem *how* to think how to play or converse. His playing may be judicious or ill-judged, but his thinking how to play is not yet itself judicious or ill-judged thinking. It may be quick or slow thinking, and efficient or inefficient thinking; but he is not yet trying to think efficiently how to play, but only trying to play efficiently. In retrospect he may find fault with the way he played, but not, as yet, with the way in which he considered how to play. He may accuse himself of playing carelessly, but not yet of thinking carelessly how to play.

In strong contrast with this, the thinking or the reflecting which we are ready to classify as intellectual work, no matter whether of low or of high level, is thinking in which the thinker is necessarily at least slightly concerned to think properly. His thinking has standards of its own, such that in retrospect the thinker may find fault with the way in which he had thought, and he may accuse himself of thinking carelessly in this or that specific respect. Now we are considering the thinking which it is the business of schools and universities to train and to stimulate. Students there are being deliberately trained and stimulated to think like good mathematicians or good historians or good philosophers or good biochemists or good composers of Latin verse or good grammarians. This is in some degree specialist thinking, and it is thinking that has achieved a sort of autonomy, since it now moves under its own steam, carries cargoes of its own and is steered by compasses of its own. It is a separate occupation. The question 'What is he doing?' can be answered by 'He is thinking'. Moreover it has a weak or strong self-correcting factor built into it. Behind, and not at all far behind the examiner's question 'What do you think about so and so?' there lies in wait the question 'Why do you think so, i.e. with what justification do you think so?' To impart propositions without giving their justification is to try to persuade, not to try to teach; and to have accepted such propositions is to believe, not to know.

I illustrate this crucial point by a partial parallel. If a wanderer is lost, he wants to find out how to reach his destination. He looks around him, moves off in one direction, then circles round and so on. Yet we should not yet rank him as an explorer, and *a fortiori* not as a geographer. For, first, he is not scanning the countryside or scrambling round it in order to advance his, or mankind's, geo-

graphical knowledge. All he wants is to get home. He is searching, but he is not *researching*. Second, his scannings and his roving have, I am supposing, no method or technique in them. He does not know how so to organize them as to make it probable or certain that he will in the end reach the river or the railway-track. He does not, for example, consistently follow the stream downhill, or he does not systematically quarter the ground, or mark off the paths that he has already tried and abandoned. He has a good reason for hunting, namely that he needs to get home before nightfall. But he has, I am supposing, no general reasons, good or even bad, for the particular hunting-moves that he makes. If his search is successful, it may succeed only by luck, or by half-memory, or by unschooled hunch or by native sense of direction; it does not succeed by being efficiently conducted.

In contrast with him, the explorer also roves and also scans, but he roves and scans methodically, and the methods are learned methods of finding out the lie of the land, whatever land it may be. Whether or not he also happens to want to arrive at a personal destination, his actions now have an independent objective of their own, namely to ascertain the geography of the area. What he discovers about the terrain may, or may not, subsequently prove useful for the particular practical purposes of people, including himself, who want to get home, want to picnic, want to find bog-flowers or transport timber and so on. But what he discovers about the terrain, *being indifferently useful for all these practical purposes, is neutral* between them. The geographical knowledge that he acquires is qualified to become anybody's property, and therefore not the personal property of anyone in particular. The formulability of this knowledge in words or in cartographical symbols is part and parcel of its being, in principle, at once public property and neutral as between the different momentary concerns of different individuals. The explorer's findings are, as such, disengaged from any particular urgencies. Moreover, exploration is, as such, subject to canons of procedure. It has a discipline, a gradually developing discipline of its own. There are correct versus incorrect, economical versus uneconomical ways of making surveys, of describing territorial features, of recording observations, and of checking estimates and measurements. The explorer, to be an explorer, must have learned from others or found out for himself some of these procedures if he is today to be putting them into practice. He can reproach himself or be reproached by others for carelessness, precipitancy, inaccuracy or muddle-headedness, as distinct from inexpertness, only if he fails to work in ways in which he already knows how to work.

If he is an explorer at all, then, though he may be surprised to

hear it, he already has something of an explorer's conscience, that is, some contempt for shoddy work and some self-recrimination for mistakes and omissions. Even without the prospects of fame or remuneration he has at least a slight inclination to do the job properly. Indeed, other things being equal, he now likes exploring for its own sake. At least a corner of his heart is in it. Exploring is, in some measure, an autonomous occupation. It can be a sufficient answer to the question 'What is he engaged in at the moment?' to say 'He is exploring such-and-such a bit of country', as it would not have been a sufficient answer to the question about the lost wanderer 'What is he engaged in at the moment?' to say 'He is roving around and scanning such and such a bit of the country.'

I hope it is obvious where I want to go from this half-way house. Thought in the near-professional or near-academic sense of the word stands to thinking in the general sense of the word as exploring and surveying stand to procedureless searching for the way home. Theoretical thinking is, in some degree, self-motivated, and it is subject to its own canons of 'correct' versus 'incorrect', 'economical' versus 'uneconomical', i.e. it has a discipline. The theorist as such has some special equipment and some special standards, a special conscience, special tastes and a special hobby. In a word, we can now credit him with that famous Faculty, an Intellect.

It does not matter in the least, for my purposes, whether our specialist thinker's intellectual pursuit is that of an historian, a mathematician, a philosopher, a literary critic, a philatelist, a grammarian or a bird-watcher; and it does not matter in the least, for my purposes, whether he is proficient, moderate or poor at it; whether he is whole-hearted or half-hearted in it; whether he is a professional or an amateur; or whether he is an adult or an adolescent. If he can do intellectual work at all, he knows what it is to get something wrong, and he knows what it is to be in a muddle; and knowing this, he also cares, however slightly, about getting things right and getting things sorted out. He would prefer to be out of the muddle, and he apologizes for the mistake. He may sulk under adverse criticism, but he can still distinguish just from unjust criticism.

Part of what I am saying is that, in its specialist sense, thought, i.e. intellectual work, has a discipline or rather a battery of disciplines of its own. But this assertion is liable to be misconstrued in two quite different ways.

1. First, it is, I think, sometimes assumed that there is just one type of intellectual fault against which the thinker must have been trained and must now be wary, namely breach of the rules of Logic. Doubtless fallaciousness in reasoning is, in some important way,

the most radical thing that can be wrong with a person's theoretical thinking. But in one scientist's criticism of the theory of another scientist, or in one historian's criticism of the work of another historian, accusations of formal fallacy are pretty rare. The faults that are actually found there belong to a wide range of different types, with most of which the formal logician has no official concern. A first-rate mathematician and a first-rate literary critic might share the one intellectual virtue of arguing impeccably, while their other intellectual virtues could be so disparate that neither could cope even puerilely with the problems of the other. Each thinks scrupulously inside his own field, but most of their scruples are of entirely different kinds. Though equally vigilant against fallacy, they also take quite different sorts of precautions against quite different sorts of mistakes, muddles and omissions. Perhaps our inherited tendency to equate rationality with the capacity to prove theorems or to deduce conclusions from premises is connected with this assumption that fallaciousness, because, maybe, the most radical, is in the last resort the only fault that a theorist can be guilty of, an assumption as far-fetched as the idea that head-on collisions are the sole penalties of bad driving on the highway.

2. There is a second way in which it would be quite natural to misconstrue my military metaphor of the 'disciplines' of intellectual work. It might be taken to imply or suggest that the thinking of the really high-grade theorist moves—distressingly unlike our own thinking—as soldiers move on the barrack-square. One evolution is smartly succeeded by another evolution, one controlled pace forward is smoothly succeeded by one controlled step to the right and so on. There is indeed some thinking which does go like this, namely what we do when adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Here we can make controlled step after controlled step, without hesitancy or loss of direction. Cash registers are better than we are at these operations. But most thinking is not and could not be like this. 'Disciplined' does not mean the same as 'regimented' or 'drilled'. A person's thinking is subject to disciplines if, for example, he systematically takes precautions against personal bias, tries to improve the orderliness or clarity of his theory, checks his references, his dates or his calculations, listens attentively to his critics, hunts industriously for exceptions to his generalizations, deletes ambiguous, vague or metaphorical expressions from the sinews of his arguments and so on indefinitely. His thinking is controlled, in high or low degree, by a wide range of quite specific scruples; and this is very different from the way in which his multiplying and dividing are regimented by those few stereotyped drills that were inculcated in him in his schooldays.



Moreover, the excogitation of a theory, or of a comprehensive and explanatory historical narrative, is not a morning's task, like laying two hundred bricks, or a five minutes' task, like a piece of long division. It can be a month's task or a decade's task, like constructing a garden. Its development is a gradual, fitful and intermittent affair. Hypotheses have to be left to germinate, grow, flower and seed themselves, or, still more often, to wither and to die. Ideas have to be weeded out, or pruned back or transplanted; the soil has to be left fallow; pests have to be poisoned, and so on.

Now, at last, we can begin to see more clearly than before how the ideas of rationality, reasonableness and reasons are internal to the notion of the thinking that needs to be graded as intellectual work. For this thinking essentially embodies the element of self-correction. Hunch, native sense of direction, following good examples, though indispensable, are no longer enough. The thinker cares, at least a little bit, whether he gets things right or wrong; he is at least slightly concerned to think properly. This involves that the question of justification is always a live question. For any hypothesis or suggestion that is made, for any question that is asked, for any argument that is constructed or even sketched, for any example that is adduced, for any word or phrase or even comma that is used, the challenge is there in the foreground or in the background, 'Why?', 'With what right?', 'For what reason?' In this respect, the ever-present justification-demand is like the justification-demand that can always be made for any action that we perform, and even for any of our reactions or feelings that are to rank as being specifically human. But the difference that matters to us is that the reasons given in justification of intellectual or theoretical operations or efforts are necessarily themselves intellectual or theoretical reasons. They are *ex officio* propositional considerations. They are not *ex officio* moral or prudential or aesthetic reasons, any more than they are reasons of courtesy, fashion, competitive prowess or good business.

Naturally, though unfortunately, the preoccupation of philosophers with theoretical reasons or justifications has often induced them to treat practical reasons and justifications as mere varieties or off-shoots of theoretical reasons, as if all scruples and all carefulness reduced, somehow, to theorists' scruples and theorists' carefulness. The genus has been reduced to a variety of one of its own species, just because this species has, and deserves, so special a cachet. Remembering too well that the historian must reply to the question 'With what justification?' by citing his documentary or archaeological evidence; or remembering too well that a Euclid must reply to the question 'With what justification?' by adducing a

derivation from axioms, philosophers have sometimes yielded to the temptation of supposing that the question 'With what justification?' when asked about an action, or an emotion, or a literary innovation, should also be replied to by adducing a proof, or at least something colourably like a proof, or by adducing a corpus of bits of evidence, or at least of things colourably like bits of evidence. 'How else,' we can hear them muttering, 'How else could a reason be a justification of something, unless in the way in which a premiss is a reason for a conclusion? How could there be practical successes or failures save as repercussions of successes or failures in theorizing? How could a person do the right thing or do a wrong thing, save as the after-effect of doing the right theoretical thing or a wrong theoretical thing? How could a person be a back-slider in his conduct, save as the after-effect of a bit of back-sliding in his theoretical reflections about how he should behave?' To ask such questions as these surely is to ask, in effect, 'How could a person learn anything in the nursery, unless he had already learned in the university how to learn nursery lessons?' or 'How could M. Jourdain talk prose before he had mastered some prose-formulated propositions about the conditions of significant prose?' 'How could the unmanufactured horse possibly get and remain in front of the manufactured cart?'

If we enjoy the egotistical pastime of giving to mankind testimonials which we withhold from other creatures; or if, more sensibly but still platitudinously, we like to give to civilized man testimonials which we withhold from uncivilized man, and to civilized man at his highest, which we half-withhold from civilized man at his decent but unglorious mean, we shall certainly lay great, though not exclusive emphasis on his past performances and his future promises as a theorist, that is, as an advancer of knowledge, no matter whether this be knowledge of nature, mathematical knowledge or knowledge of human ways and human callings. What we must not do is to confuse testimonials with explanations. Yet this is just what we do when we treat special and specially inculcated proficiencies as elemental agencies or forces; for example, when we treat Theoretical Reason as the cause of human nature's being human nature; or when we treat all our doings as the effects of some of our propositional doings, and all our faults as visible footprints left in the mud by the privy commission of inarticulate fallacies.

# Reasonableness

M. Black

## Preliminaries

MANY say and some believe that it is a good thing to be reasonable. Yet it would be heroic folly to aspire to be reasonable in all situations: those who wish to be as reasonable as it is reasonable to be may well feel uncomfortable with Reason's traditional status as a supreme value.

How far reasonableness is praiseworthy, and on what grounds, and what limitations there are upon its scope, are questions that cannot fail to engage our interest. But lurking behind them is another question, still more fundamental and at least as difficult: *What is it to be reasonable?* It is to this mind-twister that I shall address myself.

Let us remind ourselves of the kind of answer that has traditionally been offered. Two examples will suffice.

The distinguished sociologist, Morris Ginsberg, once explained that 'a rational person is one . . . who is able to bring to bear on a particular situation a knowledge of general rules which he has laid down for himself on the basis of his experience and insight' ('The function of Reason in morals', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, 1938-9, vol. 39, p. 251). We are entitled, I think, to treat 'rational' in this passage as a mere stylistic variant upon 'reasonable'. Now Ginsberg's criterion, if taken strictly, has the depressing consequence that hardly anybody is ever in a position to be 'rational'. Let the reader ask himself how often he can apply to a particular situation rules that he has 'laid down for himself' on the basis of 'experience and insight'. (And is it to matter whether the rules are correct?) Independent discovery of applicable rules is so rare that to insist upon it would make rationality as scarce as handcraft. With rules as with instruments, we must usually employ those that others have made. The best we can hope for, nearly always, is to choose wisely, not to create.

Another distinguished thinker, the late Karl Mannheim, once defined 'substantial rationality' as 'intelligent conduct based upon one's own insight into the connections between events' (*Man and*

*Society*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1940, p. 53). Here we have the same emphasis upon the agent's originality ('one's *own* insight') already criticized above, with the extra complication of an invocation of intelligence ('*intelligent* conduct'), an idea no less obscure than the notion of rationality it is supposed to clarify.

—Such statements as those quoted illustrate the common fault of inflated definition. Fired by enthusiasm for an ideal of 'Reason' or 'Rationality', a thousand writers have offered persuasive definitions of what they think *ought to be valued*. In this way zeal breeds distortion and sober analysis is supplanted by high-minded rhetoric. Too often also, the path to these inflated answers is what Peirce called the 'high priori' way: we are invited to treat as self-evident what badly needs argumentative support.

I shall undertake here the more modest task of beginning to explore what we actually mean by 'reasonable'. I start with the adjective, rather than the noun, because it resists the reification that 'Reason' positively invites. Our topic is the reasonable, with a small 'r', not Reason with a capital 'R'.

My replacement of the original question 'What is reasonableness?' by its linguistic correlate 'What do we mean by "reasonable"?' is deliberate. For an answer to the latter will necessarily be an answer to the former: I know no better way of clarifying what philosophers have called the 'concept' of something than by exploring the ways in which mastery of the concept is manifested in uses of the words expressing that concept. To render explicit how 'reasonable' and related words are used is *ipso facto* to anatomize reasonableness: there are not two tasks, but one. This sober linguistic approach to our problem has the advantage also of providing specific tasks, and difficult ones at that.

The full programme, then, would be to render explicit some of the rules governing the uses of 'reasonable' and such closely related words as 'reason' and 'justification'. Some such rules will look somewhat superficial, in their concern with grammatical categories, or with what linguists call 'constraints upon co-occurrence' (rules determining the linguistic associates of 'reasonable'); other rules, specifying conditions in which 'reasonable' may be properly applied, may seem more probingly related to the meanings of 'reasonable'. But both types of rule, 'syntactic' and 'semantic', in showing how we use 'reasonable', help to clarify its meanings.

As to evidence, I can rely only upon the reader's knowledge of what can properly be said in English or in any language into which English can be translated. That the reader possesses the requisite knowledge, in common with the writer and other competent English speakers, is certain. That still leaves plenty of room for disagreement

about details, since it is so much easier to use a word than to explain how one uses it. But let us begin.

### What kind of thing can be called 'reasonable'?

Since 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' are adjectives, they come attached to nouns that they 'qualify'. But which nouns? In a phrase of the form 'a reasonable (unreasonable) *N*', which nouns, when substituted for '*N*', will make sense? Some will not do so: it is nonsensical, in a primary context, to speak of 'a reasonable wart', or 'an unreasonable star', although we might succeed in attaching some metaphorical sense to each of these remarkable expressions.

By a 'primary context' I mean a situation in which a speaker seriously, literally and prosaically uses the expression in question, but without talking *about* it. If there were no primary contexts for a word's use, there could be no secondary uses either: jokes and lies, tropes and word-play, are parasitical upon the plain speech of primary contexts. But the 'secondary' resources of speech are inexhaustible: any string of words could, with sufficient ingenuity, be used in an intelligible utterance. A cat might jokingly be called unreasonable; 'a reasonable *if*' probably occurs in some poem of e e cummings; the sentence 'a reasonable footprint makes no sense' makes good sense. In such cases, the context is 'secondary' or abnormal: the hearer needs special information about the speaker's intentions in order to make sense of what he hears.

Among the admissible substitutions for '*N*' in 'a reasonable *N*' are the following: 'man', 'woman', 'child', 'parent', 'husband', 'chairman'—but not 'horse', 'fish', 'table' or 'lake'; also 'demand', 'question', 'objection', 'offer', 'compromise', 'explanation', 'expectation', 'prediction', 'claim'—but not 'change in weather', 'rise in cost of living', 'memory' or 'knowledge'. 'Plan', 'proposal', 'strategy', 'design' will fit—but not 'shape', 'consequence', 'configuration', 'constellation'; 'belief', 'hope', 'fear', 'resentment', 'disappointment' will do—but hardly 'joy' or 'pain'. (Some of the nouns cited will couple more readily with 'unreasonable' than with 'reasonable'.)

Such preliminary and unsystematic samplings might usefully be supplemented by seeking admissible substitutions in the expression-forms, 'It is (would be) reasonable (unreasonable) to *X*'. In this way we would get specific instances of the general categories elicited by the first test. (Cf. 'a reasonable demand' with 'it is reasonable to demand an explanation for an overcharge'.)

These simple exercises soon reveal a great variety of nouns or nominal expressions to which 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' can be sensibly attached: they include references to persons, sometimes

specialized with regard to sex ('man', 'woman'), age ('child'), status ('husband') or function ('chairman'); references to some but not all actions—including those of demanding, questioning, objecting, etc.; or, by a natural extension, to what the content of such actions might be—the demand *made*, the question *asked*, etc.; also various attitudes and feelings. This catalogue is of course incomplete.

Yet if 'reasonable' and its opposite seem uncommonly hospitable in their linguistic alliances, they are not wholly promiscuous. A common thread unites this miscellany of instances: all have to do, more or less directly, with human beings, and more specifically with what human beings can *do* (actions) or with what they can *have* (feelings, attitudes). I shall ignore here anthropomorphic extensions to higher animals—or, in another direction, to spirits, angels and deities. This observation serves to explain why such things as tables, oceans or stars are ineligible for appraisal as 'reasonable' or the reverse.

Further discriminations are needed, since some things that human beings do, such as breathing or stumbling, cannot be called 'reasonable'; and the same holds for some but not all feelings and attitudes. Let us begin with actions, as being more easily discussed than features of 'inner life'. We may usefully employ two techniques in searching for what makes actions reasonable: the examination of linguistic affiliations and repugnancies—and the construction of 'paradigm cases'.

### **Affiliations and repugnancies**

Actions amenable to appraisal as reasonable or the reverse can also be characterized by a large variety of other adjectives: 'rash', 'well-considered', 'impulsive', 'far-sighted', 'intelligent', 'sensible', 'foolish', 'prudent', 'wise', 'dangerous', 'futile', 'successful', 'pointless', 'inconsiderate', 'clumsy', 'clever', 'imaginative', 'wilful', 'irresponsible', 'wicked', 'vicious', 'irrational' and many many more. Most, if not all, of these imply approval, like 'reasonable', or disapproval, like 'unreasonable': they may be called 'appraisal-adjectives'.

I propose now to find a way of testing how these appraisal-adjectives harmonize or clash with 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' themselves.

Consider an expression of the form *A but not B*, where *A* and *B* are adjectives or adjectival expressions. One of the obvious uses of the '*... but not ...*' locution is to defeat an otherwise warranted presumption. For example, on learning that something is made of wood, we are entitled in the absence of further information to

presume that the object can float in water; however, the form of words, 'made of wood *but not* able to float', defeats that presumption, while acknowledging its presence. It has the approximate force of 'Since the object is made of wood you might expect it to float, but for all that it doesn't!'; similarly for 'well designed but unsuitable' and any number of other admissible instances of the 'but not' form. This explains why 'made of wood but able to float' sounds absurd. Incidentally, the admissibility of an instance of *A but not B* shows that being not-*B* is logically compatible with being *A*, since otherwise *A but not B* would be a flat contradiction like 'husband but not married'; the presumption of being *B* when *A* comes only to this: knowing that something is *A*, we are entitled, other things being equal and in the absence of special information, to think that it will be *B*. Alternatively: knowing that an object is *A* is some reason to think that it is also *B*.

Let us now apply these ideas to the formula 'reasonable but not *X*' where *X* may be any 'appraisal-adjective'. We obtain the following selection of admissible values of *X*: 'successful', 'prudent', 'wise'. And if we apply the same test to the positive variant 'reasonable *but X*', we get, among others: 'dangerous', 'futile', 'short-sighted'. It is significant however that the following seem to be inadmissible values for either formula: 'rash', 'foolish', 'futile', 'stupid', 'inconsiderate'—and, on the other hand, 'well-considered', 'intelligent', 'sensible', 'far-sighted', etc. We could obtain further insight on the logical connexions between these adjectives and 'reasonable' by considering which of them could be admissible values in 'reasonable *and X*', 'reasonable *and hence X*' or their negative variants. The reader may be able to satisfy himself that the connexions between the meanings of the nine appraisal-adjectives last mentioned and the presence or absence of reasonableness are tighter than those of mere presumption.

Further work of this sort might lead us to some such summarizing formula as the following:

In order for an action to be reasonable it must be well-considered, intelligent, sensible, far-sighted, etc. and may be presumed to be prudent, wise, etc.; while its being rash, foolish, futile, stupid or inconsiderate will normally disqualify it for praise as 'reasonable'.

This is all very rough as yet, and inaccurate without some rather obvious qualifications. But my aim is to illustrate a potentially useful technique, rather than to apply it in boring detail. In support of the recommended procedure of searching for 'affiliations and repugnancies' we can adduce the well-known and somewhat

obvious semantical principle that the meaning conveyed by a word is a function of its admissible contrasts: when a speaker calls something 'reasonable' the information he conveys depends upon how many other things he might have chosen to call that action instead. (Thus, if the only contrast intended were with 'unreasonable', the information conveyed would be minimal.) A detailed exploration of what I have called the 'affiliations and repugnancies' of 'reasonable' would help us, perhaps better than a formal definition, to understand its role in our language. If such an undertaking also aroused interest in such linguistic cognates as 'prudent', 'sensible' and 'intelligent', so much the better. For 'reasonable' is a nodal word—a place at which many semantic threads are knotted together. Like other words, it has a trailing set of friendly and hostile cognates. More generally, our utterances always imply *this but not that* and *this, so* (necessarily, presumably) *that*. And the consequent incompleteness of all explicit formulations—as shown by the possibility of unending elaboration of the tacit implications, presumptions and suggestions—is inescapable.

*Reasonable and rational; unreasonable and irrational.* To use 'rational' and 'irrational' as pretentious variants for 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' is to blur some important differences of meaning. The tests we have just used can help to highlight these. I hope the reader will agree that 'unreasonable but irrational' makes no sense, and that there is something wrong about 'unreasonable and irrational' and about 'unreasonable, and hence irrational'. Similar dissonances arise from trying to combine 'rational' with 'reasonable', although it is somewhat easier to treat these positives as straightforwardly synonymous.

One has the impression that in stigmatizing something as *irrational*—and the censure is part of the meaning—we are going beyond *dianoetic* appraisal and are moving, as it were, on a different plane. This impression is confirmed by the discrepancies in the ranges of co-occurrence of the two words: we talk about an 'irrational impulse', but surely not—or not so freely—about an 'unreasonable impulse'?

The explanation seems to be that in calling an action unreasonable we are implying that the agent's reasons are unsatisfactory. So we are at least implying that he *has* reasons to be criticized: the reproach pays him the compliment of supposing him able, as we say, to 'listen to reason'. But to call him irrational is to imply a more severe disorder: we diagnose his action, rather than take issue with it. (Yet, interestingly enough, we still reprehend it.) An irrational act calls for therapy or restraint rather than for argument, and this may be why we are willing to call irrational what is beyond



the agent's control. I can say no more here about this interesting topic.

### The method of 'paradigm cases'

A more direct attack upon the meaning of 'reasonable' and its opposite can be made by trying to describe what philosophers call 'paradigm cases'<sup>2</sup>—examples of the use of a word, so clear and unproblematic that they exhibit part of that word's meaning. A paradigm case of the use of 'reasonable action' would be a real or imaginary action of which we could properly say '*That* is a reasonable action, if anything is!' Such an exemplary instance could be used as a standard—to remind ourselves of what we mean by 'reasonable', to test another's understanding of the word, or to teach its meaning to a child. For to refuse to apply 'reasonable' to such a paradigm, when fully acquainted with its character, would be to fail to understand how we use the word and so to betray partial ignorance of the English Language or to manifest some eccentricity of usage.

But if we now try to produce some paradigmatic cases of reasonable action, we find an unexpected hitch. It is relatively easy to describe paradigmatic—clear, unproblematic, exemplary—instances of *unreasonable* action, but surprisingly hard to find equally uncontroversial instances of the reasonable. One may suspect that 'unreasonable' is the word that 'wears the trousers', to use a phrase of J. L. Austin's, and that the root idea of 'reasonable' is no more than 'not unreasonable'.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, it may do no harm to begin with clear cases of unreasonable actions in the hope of capturing the notion of reasonableness by indirection.

I accordingly propose the following as clear, paradigmatic cases of *unreasonable* actions:

- (a) to look for somebody's telephone number in the directory, when you know that he has no telephone;<sup>4</sup>
- (b) to buy a dog if you don't like dogs and have no use for one (say as a watchdog);
- (c) to look for pound-notes on the pavement;
- (d) to guess the date of the siege of Vienna when a reference book with the information is at your elbow;
- (e) to assert before you have looked into a bag that it will contain black marbles (assuming that you have no special knowledge about the bag);

(f) having drawn ten white marbles from the bag, to claim that the next to be drawn will not be white;

(g) to complain that a man is ungrateful for an injury you have done him; and so on.

In each case,<sup>5</sup> we can explain why the verdict of unreasonableness is in order, though the fault varies from case to case: futility (case (a)), pointlessness (b), action on infinitesimal probability of success (c), choice of defective means to the end in view (d), absence of sufficient reason (e), action in conflict with evidence (f), action based upon assumptions plainly false (g).

### The analysis of reasonable action

Reflection upon the failures of reasonableness in the examples listed above and upon similar examples which I omit suggests the following budget of necessary conditions for the reasonableness of actions.

1. *Only actions under actual or potential control by the agent are suitable for dianoetic appraisal.* Behaviour that may be thought undesirable, such as irrepressible grimaces or clumsy and unco-ordinated gestures, can be called reasonable or unreasonable only if the person in question can be held *responsible* and so able, at least in principle, to exercise choice, decision and restraint. Such actions may be called voluntary, with a side-glance at the slipperiness of that word: they may, however, be performed without conscious intention or calculation. Here we may recall that we do not speak of reasonable sensations or of unreasonable physical pains, and it would make sense to speak of a reasonable dream only if the dreamer had the extraordinary power to choose what he dreamed.

2. *Only actions directed towards some end-in-view can be reasonable or unreasonable.* Where nothing is hoped of an action, nothing intended, it is absurd to praise it as reasonable or to denigrate it as unreasonable. This is perhaps why it sounds so strange to speak of 'reasonable walking' or 'reasonable eating', *simpliciter*, although both activities are voluntary; and 'reasonable painting' is just as odd, because there is no definite end-in-view. But it is quite natural to say 'It is reasonable to eat more in order to reduce your indigestion' or 'It would be reasonable to walk in order to have a better chance to catch a bus'. Reference to an end-in-view at once reinstates the propriety of dianoetic appraisal.

3. *Dianoetic appraisal is relative to the agent and to his choice of end-in-view.* It may be reasonable for you to buy a bicycle if you can afford one and enjoy cycling, and unreasonable for me to do the same if I am crippled. And the very same action, say answering a question

about the time by saying 'Buddha is a dung-heap', may be reasonable or not under different aspects. It makes a difference whether you want the interlocutor to know the time—or whether you hope to prod him into *satori*. The Zen masters are not necessarily unreasonable, however absurd their actions may seem.

Here is a convenient point at which to distinguish between reasonableness (or the reverse) *from the agent's standpoint*—and the dianoetic judgment of a competent observer. What may be thought reasonable, given the agent's limited knowledge, may still be judged unreasonable from a more comprehensive perspective. But we shall soon see that the agent's subjective judgment of the reasonableness of what he is doing cannot be insulated from—indeed, positively invites—the more objective verdict of a disinterested and better-informed spectator.

4. *Judgments of reasonableness are appropriate only where there is partial knowledge about the availability and efficacy of the means.* When we are quite ignorant of what to do (which we almost never are) any action is as reasonable as any other—that is to say, in one sense not reasonable at all.

When we know the sole means to achieve our end, there is a weak irony or facetiousness about calling the obligatory action 'reasonable'. There is nothing reasonable about dowsing a fire—though it would be highly unreasonable not to do so. Nor is there anything merely reasonable about accepting the answer of a correct addition sum. Here, 'reasonable' is an implausible meiosis.

Dianoetic appraisal, to make the point in another way, is characteristically appropriate when we have to act in conditions of uncertainty (as we do most of the time). This may be why 'reasonable' will not combine with such 'achievement words' as 'know', 'remember', 'see', 'recognize', etc. The natural habitat of 'reasonable' is a situation in which a task is to be performed, with the outcome still in doubt.

Among the obviously relevant criteria for reasonable action in uncertainty are the likelihood of success and the cost of the available means in relation to their probable efficacy and the value of the outcome. It is unreasonable to try slicing meat with a very blunt knife, when a sharper one is at hand; and it is unreasonable in another way to pay an expert £10 to help you save £5 on your income tax.<sup>6</sup>

It follows that dianoetic judgments are—or perhaps ought to be—typically *comparative*: if we can sometimes say that one action is more reasonable than another, we are very seldom able to choose a single action as uniquely reasonable.

5. *Dianoetic appraisal can always be supported by reasons.* In the

jargon of philosophers, 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' always refer to 'supervenient' characters of a situation: the question 'What is reasonable (unreasonable) about that?' must always admit of an answer. If what has been said under the previous heading is right, a defence of a judgment recommending one action rather than another will typically invoke relative probabilities and relative utilities, in some plausible combination. 'It's reasonable to do *A* rather than *B*, because it's more likely to achieve what you want—and, besides, it costs no more.' Now the moment we begin to argue, in some such way, we produce reasons, and reasons are no respecters of persons. Where we have taken account of the agent's own choice of ends (point 3. above) and his own scale of relative values ('utilities' and 'disutilities'—rewards and hurts), we leave no room for further subjectivity. An acceptable answer about reasonableness, relative to a given end and a given set of preferences, must be as impersonal, as 'objective', if it exists, as a question about the right conclusion to a logical argument. Thus, all attributions of reasonableness, however casually or privately made, have a built-in thrust towards objective justifiability. Whatever is reasonable must also be justifiable, that is to say supportable by reasons that any unbiased impartial judge would have to accept. Unfortunately, this doesn't give us much practical help in deciding what is reasonable, or relatively more reasonable, in problematic cases; for the notion of 'a reason' is at least as controversial as the topic of this paper.

6. To call an action reasonable is to approve it, and to call it unreasonable is to censure it. This point has been implicit throughout this discussion in my frequent reference to 'reasonable' as a term of appraisal. It is worth making explicit, however, that the praise is part of the standard meaning of the word (as also in the cases of 'fine', 'good', 'splendid' and the like) and can be overridden in speech only by using irony, paradox or some other *ad hoc* rhetorical device.

Some philosophers say that the method of paradigm cases fails for 'evaluative expressions', at least in establishing uncontroversial cases of the required evaluation: they grant that factual or 'descriptive' conditions for application are determined by linguistic convention, but hold it essential to evaluation that the agent be left free to make his own evaluations. Thus J. O. Urmson, in his influential paper,<sup>8</sup> says: 'There is thus a close logical connexion between an evaluative expression and the accepted standards for its appropriate use; but this cannot be identity of meaning, for no evaluation can be identical in meaning with a description' (my italics).

This is, however, to take an indefensibly narrow view of meaning and of the purpose of appeal to paradigms. To the extent that approval is built into the proper use of 'good' in certain situations,

such approval is part of its meaning; and the same is true of 'reasonable'. In finding paradigm cases of the use of 'reasonable', we are therefore producing cases where by linguistic conventions a speaker counts as approving of what he labels 'reasonable'. If we don't like the implied set of standards, we can try to change the language, avoid using the word in question, or override the *prima facie* connotation of approval by using appropriate devices. But that is another story.

I once heard some students condemn a talk about student grievances as 'too reasonable'. Intelligible as this comment was, it depended upon the general understanding that to call something reasonable is, *so far*, to praise it. Saying of somebody that he is 'too virtuous' is an instance of the same device.

Yet if to dub something as reasonable is, at least provisionally, to praise it, the praise is faint and has in most contexts something depreciatory about it. A reasonable action, as we have seen, may turn out to be unsuccessful—or even *wrong*, however justified: a reasonable move in a game of chess might be just the one to permit a crushing yet unforeseeable combination. There are often better things for an action to be than merely reasonable, even if reasonableness is the best we can aim at. 'Intelligent' and 'imaginative' are rather warmer, while 'reasonable' has something of the tepidity of 'sensible', 'defensible' and 'respectable'. In moral contexts, and some others, 'right' is a good deal stronger than 'reasonable'.

It begins to look as if reasonableness is a somewhat humdrum, pedestrian virtue, involving as it does a problematic calculation of probabilities and expected values in situations of inescapable fallibility. This is why 'reasonable' with a small 'r' smacks too much of the prudential for some tastes.

### The reasonableness of feelings and emotive attitudes

Our preliminary investigation into the reasonableness of actions could be summarized by some such formula as the following:

In a situation in which it is uncertain which action to take, an action is reasonable if there is some sufficient reason to take it, and no better reason to choose one of the alternatives.

Here the reference to 'reasons' points implicitly to the complex tangle of factors—conduciveness to the end-in-view, probable efficiency, cost (in the wide sense) and the like—which I have mentioned.

If we try to apply some such formula as this to the case of feelings, in the belief that use of the same label of approbation is no accident,

## Reasonableness

we shall encounter certain difficulties. For one thing, the notion of *conduciveness to an end-in-view* will have to be replaced by something like *appropriateness*, although the root idea of justifiable reason will still survive. We call a fear unreasonable, for instance, if the object feared is not really dangerous enough to justify the degree of fear evoked. Here, perhaps, it is not difficult to see a connexion with the pattern of reasonableness in actions proper.

A more serious difficulty is that it is commonly agreed that feelings and emotive attitudes are not so plainly under control as actions. It is hardly fair, one might object, to call a fear unreasonable, and so to condemn it, if there really is no way to repress that fear. Well, its manifestation at least is more or less under control: a man beset by cowardly fears may still be able to act bravely. And an appraisal of the feeling itself may appeal from the unbridled immediacy of momentary feeling to a cooler verdict in the future—from Richard drunk with emotion to Richard soberly recollecting his feelings. The long-term influence of such appraisal should not be underrated. Hume said that reason was the slave of the passions, but the desire to be reasonable may itself be a 'passion', able to contend with other passions and sometimes to curb them.

## Being reasonable

We have proceeded far enough to see, at least in outline, how reasonable behaviour looks. A man will be acting reasonably to the extent that he tries to form a clear view of the end to be achieved and its probable value to him, assembles the best information about available means, their probable efficacy and the price of failure, and in the light of all this chooses the course of action most strongly recommended by good reasons. (A similar account, suitably modified, will apply to the choice of attitudes and ends, to the extent that choice of these is possible.) Such a posture has quasi-moral implications, since the requisite calculation demands a sustained effort to suppress bias and, in striving for impartiality and objectivity, to pay a decent respect to the opinions of others. To act reasonably is to be willing to reason and thereby to submit to impersonal judgment. But a morality entirely based upon reasonableness would be at best anaemic and frigid: a man can reason and reason and still be a villain.

To many, and perhaps especially to the young, there will be something unattractive about the character of dispassionate deliberation here evoked: the reasonable man will smack too much of the conscientious judge. But consideration, respect, kindness, mercy and love are not really competitors for justice—except for the muddled:

## Reasonableness

- 7 But what if *A* does cost more than *B*? Here we encounter the type of difficulty mentioned in the last note. Is it reasonable to pay one surgeon ten times as much as another in order to raise your chance of surviving an operation from  $5/6$  to  $7/8$ ? It is too facile to reply that it depends on how much you value your life. I believe that the question has no determinate answer.
- 8 J. O. Urmson, 'Some questions concerning validity', in *Essays in Conceptual Analysis*, ed. A. Flew, Macmillan, 1956, p. 128.

## Introduction

I ONCE gave a series of talks to a group of psycho-analysts who had trained together and was rather struck by the statement made by one of them that, psychologically speaking, 'reason' means saying 'no' to oneself. Plato, of course, introduced the concept of 'reason' in a similar way in *The Republic* with the case of the thirsty man who is checked in the satisfaction of his thirst by the thought that the water may be poisoned. But Plato was also so impressed by man's ability to construct mathematical systems by reasoning that he called it the divine element of the soul. What has this ability to do with that of saying 'no' to oneself? And what have either of these abilities to do with the disposition to be impartial which is intimately connected with our notion of a reasonable man, or with what David Hume called a 'wonderful and unintelligible instinct' in our souls by means of which men are able to make inferences from past to future?

It must readily be admitted that there are few surface similarities between the uses of 'reason' in these contexts. No obvious features protrude which might be fastened on as logically necessary conditions for the use of the term 'reason'. But beneath the surface there may be lurking common notions that are, or can be, of importance in our lives. To make them explicit is to give structure and substance to what is often called 'the life of reason' and to show that this is not inconsistent with a life of passion as is often thought. This seems eminently worth attempting at a time when many people seem hostile to reason. For those who demand instant gratification, who adopt some existentialist stance, who cultivate violence or mystical experience, or who merely do what others do, are all, in various ways, resisting the claims of reason on them. What they are resisting is not just the demand that they should reflect and calculate; it is also the influence of passions and sentiments that underlie a form of life.

The plan of this paper will therefore be:

1. To set out briefly some central notions connected with the concept of 'reason'.



## *Reason and passion*

2. To enquire into the usual contrast between reason and passion.

3. To attempt a more adequate conceptualization of this contrast in terms of different levels of life.

## **Some general features of 'reason'**

### *Reason and intelligence*

The view that what is distinctive of man is his rationality was more or less unchallenged from the time of the Greeks until the Copernican revolution in thought about man brought about by Darwin's theory of evolution. The continuity hypothesis suggested both that men were much more like brutes than had been previously thought because of the instincts which they shared with them, and that brutes were much more like men because they too possessed reason, albeit of an embryonic sort. What was really meant was that there are good grounds for thinking that some animals are intelligent.

What, then, is meant by saying that an animal or a man is intelligent? To qualify for being so called, behaviour has to take place in a situation to deal with which either there exists no established routine or which is different in some respect from a situation for which there exists a routine. We then say that behaviour is intelligent if there is evidence to suggest that the man grasps the features of the situation which, in the former case, are relevant to whatever he wants or is required to do, or those which, in the latter case, make it inappropriate for him to do what he usually does. The higher mammals, such as dogs, cats and apes, both respond to unfamiliar situations in ways which are relevant to obtaining what they want, and modify their standard responses when they no longer help them to satisfy their wants. There is therefore little reason to doubt that their behaviour displays intelligence, if we are prepared to accept the continuity hypothesis.

Why, then, would we not be prepared to go further and say that the behaviour of animals and young children is reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational? Surely because these words suggest the ability to reason in the sense of explicitly employing generalizations and rules in the forming of beliefs and in the planning of action. Man is rational, maintained Aristotle, in the sense that he imposes plans and rules on his behaviour and has a capacity for theorizing. Animals and small children do not do any of these things in any explicit sense. Still less do they exhibit any tendency to link the past, present and future by means of generalizations and rules stated in a universal form. Young children lack a

concept of the past and future and there is no reason to suppose that animals recall and remember as distinct from merely recognizing things. Animals and young children live very much in the here and now; they lack the most general characteristic of reason which is the transcendence of the particular.<sup>2</sup>

*The transcendence of the here and now*

The most obvious and all-pervading feature of reason is surely this transcendence of the this, the here and the now. This is embryonic in any form of perception or action; for we always see something as something and want something under some aspect, and this classification implicitly relates the here and now to the past and future. But in reasoning this relating is extended and made explicit, mainly by the use of language. Explanation, planning, justification, all share in common this obvious characteristic. They connect what is, what is done and what is to be done with the past and the future by means of generalizations and rules. This general feature of reason emerges clearly if we consider what reason is usually contrasted with—authority, revelation, tradition, etc. In these cases what is right or true is finally determined by appeal to some particular man, body or set of practices; it is not determined by appeal to general considerations.

A more formal way of making this point is to say that, in the use of reason, particularities of time, place and identity are irrelevant to the determination of what is true, correct or to be done. In science, for instance, which is a paradigm case of reason, appeal is made to a universal law which, in principle, anyone can test. Nothing depends on the identity of the individual who states or tests it. Similarly in prudential reasoning about conduct, when one says 'no' to oneself, there is a presupposition that, other things being equal, the mere position in time of the satisfaction of a desire is of itself irrelevant. This is a point well made by Sidgwick in this axiom of prudence 'that Hereafter *as such* is to be regarded neither more nor less than Now'.<sup>3</sup> Mabbott also stresses the function of reason in devising time-schedules for the satisfaction of desires, which is a device for avoiding conflicts.<sup>4</sup> This presupposes that, other things being equal, mere position in time is an irrelevant consideration in the satisfaction of desires.<sup>5</sup>

The same sort of point can be made about identity in cases where we reason about the distribution of something good or bad. If I am going to benefit or suffer as a consequence of an action some special characterization of myself has to be given which relevantly differentiates me from others if the fact that *I* am going to suffer or benefit

### *Reason and passion*

is to be regarded as having any special significance. This abstract principle of no distinctions without relevant differences is central to all forms of reasoning. Reason, in other words, is opposed to any form of arbitrariness.

### *The public character of reason*

The irreconcilability of the use of reason with egocentricity and arbitrariness is a reflection of its essentially public character. It is public, not just in the sense that its vehicle is language whose concepts and rules of syntax are a public possession, but in the further sense that, even when it takes place in the individual's head, it is an internalization of public procedures—those of criticism, the production of counter-examples and the suggestion of different points of view.

Reason, in this developed sense, of course has its origin in the primitive tendency manifest in intelligence to 'accommodate' or to change assumptions because the differences encountered in a novel situation do not permit assimilation, or the fitting of it within existing assumptions. But in reasoning proper, this caution born of the frequent experience of being in error because of the differences between situations becomes the principle enunciated by Francis Bacon, that a search must always be made for the negative instance. Conscious, explicit attempts must be made to falsify assumptions, to find exceptions to rules; for only in this way can more reliable assumptions and rules gradually be built up. There must also be some form of public test to decide between competing assumptions. This means agreement not just about how answers are to be sought but also about the types of considerations that are to count as deciding between possible answers. Science is the supreme example of reason in action not just because of the opportunities for criticism which it provides, but also because of the agreement in judgments which it permits by means of its testing procedures. These guarantee objectivity and the escape from arbitrariness.

It is most implausible to suggest that these critical procedures develop naturally in children's minds as they grow up. History and psychology give no support to this flattering belief. In the history of man the overwhelming tendency has been for men to believe what they are told and to do what is expected of them. It is only at rare periods in history that sporadic curiosity and uneasiness about what is generally accepted have become embedded in a critical tradition. Psychologically speaking, too, the general proclivity of men is to believe what they want to believe and to accept the approved view of the group. Francis Bacon was one of the first to note what has

since become a psychological platitude, that the determination to look for the negative instance, to subject assumptions to criticism, goes against a deep-seated tendency of the human mind, which William James called 'the primacy of belief'. The determination to find out the truth, to get to the bottom of things, tends to develop only if people are brought up in contact with a critical tradition.

This means that what we call reasoning is not just the exercise of some inner potentiality. Maybe it presupposes curiosity, which is probably unlearned, and the use and understanding of language, which probably has an innate basis. But in some cultures curiosity is definitely discouraged and there is, too, all the difference in the world between curiosity, which may be sporadic, and the passion for truth that lies at the heart of developed forms of reasoning. Some cultures, in their child-rearing practices, perpetuate arbitrariness and so discourage the development of an enquiring mind.<sup>6</sup> Even within one society, too, the type of language employed can seriously affect the capacity for reasoning. The elaborated code of the middle class, for instance, is a much more suitable vehicle for reasoning than the restricted code of the working class, which does not facilitate the communication of ideas or of relationships which require precise formulation.<sup>7</sup> The frequent use of generalizations, the appeal to principles and the development of criticism are reflections of a social situation in which ideas are discussed, proposals debated and orthodoxies challenged.

Thus the individual, who is accustomed to reason in this developed sense, is one who has taken a critic into his own consciousness, whose mind is structured by the procedures of a public tradition. A reasonable man is one who is prepared to discuss things, to look at a situation impartially from the point of view of others than himself, to discount his own particular biases and predilections. As G. H. Mead put it, he can adopt the point of view of the 'generalized other'. The disposition to adopt this point of view is a reflection in his consciousness of social situations in which the point of view of others has in fact been represented.

### The contrast between reason and passion

There are many other points that could be made about the use of reason, but enough has been said to deal with the contrast often made between reason and passion.

#### *Hume's dichotomy*

Hume put generations of philosophers on the wrong track by his claim that reason is merely the ability to make inductive and

deductive inferences whose basis is a 'wonderful and unintelligible instinct' in the soul of the individual. He contrasted *reason*, which is inert, with *passions*, which he regarded as psychological entities which move people to act. He did, however, draw attention to a special class of 'disinterested passions' which, because of their calmness and steadiness, are often mistaken for reason. He had in mind the attitudes which go with taking the point of view of the impartial spectator.

What Hume did not appreciate, however, was that these so-called passions are intimately connected with the use of reason rather than distinct entities that are liable to be mistaken for it; for the use of reason is inexplicable without them. Without the attitude of impartiality, for instance, the individual could not concentrate on relevant considerations and counteract his inclination to favour his own point of view or that of someone to whom he might be attracted or attached. He could not disregard the promptings connected with time, place and identity which, it has been argued, are among the main features of reason. For to use one's reason is to be influenced by this type of passion.

It might be thought, therefore, adapting Hume's view slightly, that the proper distinction to be drawn is between the calm passions associated with the use of reason and the more turbulent ones of a less disinterested type; and certainly the ordinary use of 'passions' does suggest some kind of turbulence. But this suggestion is not really tenable; for in some people the passions connected with the use of reason can be violent. When Bertrand Russell, for instance, was referred to as 'The Passionate Sceptic' the suggestion was that his passion for truth was anything but calm.

*The philosophical and the ordinary sense of 'passion'*

What, then, is there in common between the philosophical conception of 'passion', as something that provides an inducement to act, and the ordinary usage of 'passion', which suggests some kind of turbulence or state of heightened feeling? Is there necessarily any contrast between reason and these states of mind? A clue to this may be provided by asking when a passion, in the philosophical sense, would normally be referred to as a passion in ordinary language. When, for instance, would a concern for fairness or an abhorrence of irrelevance be referred to as a passion? Usually, surely, when looking at a situation in a way which warrants the terms 'fair' or 'irrelevant' if connected with things that come over us which we may not be able to control. To have a passion for truth suggests more than just caring about it. It suggests that we are

'stupid' and the reasoning itself can be intelligently or stupidly done; but there does not have to be. That is why we can use the word of dogs and small children.

In cases, however, where we use the words 'unreasonable' and 'irrational' we assume a background of reasoning that the person either actually performed or could have performed. Both presuppose some estimate of the alternatives which are open and some assessment of the comparative strength of considerations deriving from them as they apply to what the problem is. In the theatre case, for instance, the man's behaviour could be regarded as unreasonable if he failed to book seats, because, though it was a very popular play, he had thought that there was no need to book seats as it was Monday and theatres are not usually booked up on Mondays. What would make it unreasonable would be *both* the fact that he had reason for not booking *and* that there were other reasons which were more cogent—in this case that this was a very popular play, a fact which others had impressed upon him. A background of reasoning must also be assumed for the word 'irrational' to be used. Suppose, for instance, that the theatre which he wanted to visit was known to be booked up, and suppose he also knew that there was little likelihood of his getting a ticket at the door, and he then refused to accept tickets that were offered to him by one of his colleagues. This would be called irrational and some special explanation would have to be given for his refusal—e.g. some aversion to the colour of the tickets or to his colleagues.

'Unreasonable' and 'irrational' have, then, in common the requirement of some kind of background of reasoning before they can be applied and, in this respect, are different from 'stupid' which does not have to have such a background. What then is the difference between saying that behaviour is 'irrational' as distinct from 'unreasonable'? Can any general points be extracted from the example given? If we describe a person's behaviour as irrational we are suggesting that he is deviating from what I have elsewhere called the *purposive rule-following model* of behaviour with knowledge of what the standards of correct behaviour are.<sup>10</sup> He must be assumed to think that a certain course of action is the only one that is likely to get him what he wants or to be in accordance with a rule which he accepts. He then refrains from taking this course of action, knowing what he does. Practically always, in cases when we describe behaviour as irrational, we add the special explanation which accounts for this deviation, e.g. that he had *some* inner obsession or absurd scruple, or that he was overcome by emotion. 'Irrational' functions as a diagnosis as well as a complaint.

The charge of 'unreasonable', on the other hand, is different.

Unlike 'unreasoning' it presupposes that a person has reasons for what he does; but it suggests that the reasons are very weak, and that he does not pay attention to the reasons of others. A man who does something which is unreasonable is not like the man who does something irrational in that he knows what the appropriate thing to do is but, because of something that comes over him, does not do it. On the contrary he has a very limited view of what considerations are of most weight in a situation. There is a suggestion that he has a somewhat myopic viewpoint of the situation and takes little account of considerations advanced by others. He falls down on the cardinal requirements of objectivity. 'Unreasonableness' has social dimensions which are not implicit in 'irrationality'.<sup>11</sup>

So much, then, for the lines along which meaning must be given to the terms 'unreasonable' and 'irrational' when applied to conduct. The same lines of analysis seem to fit the application of these terms to beliefs as well as to conduct. An irrational belief is one that is held wittingly in the face of conclusive evidence against it or one that is held with conviction when it is extremely problematical whether anything could count as evidence against it. An instance of the first type would be that of a man who believes that his hands are dirty in spite of having repeatedly washed them and in spite of no dirt being visible; an example of the second would be that of a man who believes that a wood is inhabited by fairies. A belief is unreasonable, on the other hand, if there are some considerations which might be produced to support it, but which are clung on to in spite of very strong reasons marshalled against it. If, for instance, a man persists in believing that the Labour Party will win the next election simply because Mr Wilson has said so, I think we might well describe his belief as unreasonable.

*Being 'unreasonable' or 'irrational' and being subject to passion*

Given that this is how the terms 'unreasonable' and 'irrational' function is there necessarily a suggestion that when we lapse from the proper use of reason we are in some way subject to passion? This does not seem to be the case, at least when we are dealing with examples of being unreasonable. The man who bungled the business of getting the theatre tickets was not overcome by any passion; the man with the trusting faith in Mr Wilson's words might be in a very calm state. Conversely there is the obvious point that what we call emotions are good examples of passive states; but we can speak of them as being both unreasonable and irrational. This suggests that, on certain occasions, we can at least speak of them as reasonable, if not as rational. Suppose, for instance, that I discover, by a perfectly

valid process of inference, that my friend has deceived me. I am struck dumb with indignation and my indignation is perfectly justified in the senses both that he really has deceived me and that there is some sort of appropriateness, which would need to be elaborated, between my understanding of the situation and my response. My reaction would be perfectly reasonable.

What, then, would make an emotion irrational or unreasonable? Emotions, such as jealousy, go with specific estimates of a situation. If there is absolutely nothing in a situation which gives a man grounds for thinking that someone else is after that to which he thinks he has a right, then it is irrational for him to be jealous. But if there are some grounds, but not good grounds, then jealousy is unreasonable. Othello's jealousy was unreasonable, not completely irrational, unless he is regarded as a pathological type of case; for there are people who are so threat-orientated that they interpret almost any situation in this self-referential sort of way. They rig their environment to match a permanent mood. We call such attitudes irrational because, from an objective point of view, as distinct from their point of view, there is absolutely nothing in their situation which deserves this type of interpretation. Othello's jealousy was not of this type. He had very flimsy grounds and steadfastly refused to look at the situation in a more objective way, to see it as others saw it.

These cases bring out the importance of having standards of appropriateness if the words 'unreasonable' or 'irrational' are to be used in the sphere of the emotions. These standards can be connected with judgments of appropriateness of two main types. We can say, for instance, that a reaction is inappropriate in the case of, say, jealousy, because there is nothing, or not much, in the situation which would justify anyone in thinking that this conformed to the general criteria that are conceptually connected with 'jealousy'—e.g. that to which one thinks one has a right is, in some way, threatened by someone else. This is the type of case that we have so far considered. But it might be suggested that to be jealous *at all* is either 'irrational' or 'unreasonable'. This would either condemn completely or raise serious doubts about the judgment built into jealousy that there is something wrong or inappropriate in others venturing in various ways into one's own special domain. Some philosophers have held that all such transitory emotions are unreasonable, if not downright irrational. What enables them to say this is the complicated story which they tell about the situation in which we are placed in the world which makes the judgments involved in jealousy either completely inappropriate or lacking in cogency when compared with other considerations, depending on whether it was thought of as irrational or unreasonable. Such a



philosopher might therefore say that falling in love with anyone is quite irrational; for it involves becoming attached to a particular person in the world which is an absurdity for anyone who sees life under a certain aspect of eternity. We, on the other hand, might not see the state of mind in this cosmic context. We might regard falling in love as a-rational, just one of those things to which human beings are subject. Being in such a state would not qualify for being either reasonable or rational; for it would be denied that there are any standards of appropriateness by reference to which it could be judged. But, on the other hand, it *might* have little to do with passion either. For we might be little moved by it. Some impulses and inclinations might also fall into this category. Someone might just like looking at trees or at animals. Such a want might be neither reasonable nor unreasonable, and it might be so feeble that to call it a passion would also be a misnomer.

It does not seem, therefore, that the passive states, which we call emotions, are *necessarily* either irrational or unreasonable. Nevertheless there is a tendency for them to be. For as the appraisals, which are intimately connected with them, are very important to us, they are often made rather intuitively and urgently, with little careful analysis of the grounds for making them. They are also the most potent *source* of irrationality in that attention to features which are relevant to making *other* sorts of judgments is often deflected by irrelevant appraisals which are conceptually connected with our emotions. The analysis of 'irrationality' brought out the point that it involves failing to do or believe what there are conclusive reasons for doing or believing, for which a special explanation is necessary. And the special explanation is very often in terms of some emotion to which we are subject, that makes us unable to follow the logic of the situation or argument. There is thus a much closer connexion between being irrational and emotion than there is between emotion and being unreasonable.

In approaching, therefore, the type of distinction that people have wanted to make in terms of 'reason' and 'passion' we must abandon altogether the contrast between reason as an inert capacity and passions which move us to act. We must instead attempt to give a new description of the contrast in terms of different levels of life in which being reasonable, unreasonable, rational and irrational are placed in proper perspective.

### Levels of life

There is a level of life at which young infants live all the time, and primitive people part of the time, which might be called a-rational

in that it has not reached the level at which experience is structured by categories of thought associated with reason. More often, however, we describe it as irrational because we assume a lapse from a rational level on the part of the person who is capable of functioning at such a level.

*Irrationality*

The most all-pervasive characteristic of this low-grade type of experience is that it is dominated by wishes and aversions. This, as I have argued before, was the most important insight which Freud contributed to psychological theory.<sup>12</sup> He noted three main characteristics of wishful thinking:

1. It does not observe the principles of rational thought—e.g. it lacks a sense of reality, it does not follow the causal principle, it is not bounded by any determinate spatio-temporal framework.
2. It proceeds by some principle of affective congruence in which, for example, a snake stands for the male sex organ.
3. It is controlled only by strange 'mechanisms' of condensation and displacement.

Freud himself did not elaborate the cognitive aspect of wishing; he was more interested in the motivational aspect, the all-pervasive influence of the sex-instinct. But later theorists such as Arieti and Werner have studied the details of the primitive sort of cognition involved. Arieti draws attention not simply to the obvious characteristics of wishing which links it with magic and with the child's and maniac's conviction of omnipotence, namely the absence of a sense of reality and of causal connexion in relation to the means necessary to obtain what is wished for; he also suggests that it proceeds by a more primitive, paleologic form of thinking, in which classification is purely on the basis of the similarity of predicates without any importance being attached to the subject.<sup>13</sup> It is thus a pre-Aristotelian type of thinking which can be found among some primitive people who identify men, crocodiles and wildcats because they have the common property of having an evil spirit. Young children between the ages of one and a half and three and a half are also prone to this type of thinking. The similarity picked out is one that is related to some primitive wish or aversion.

There are, of course, other features of low-grade thinking. But this particular feature of it will serve to make the main point which is that it manifests the combination of wish or aversion together with a low-grade form of classification and inference. This is frequent in pathological states. The man, for instance, who flares up or behaves

in some other inappropriate way when confronted with an authority figure, is picking on one feature of similarity between his father, towards whom he had an aversion, and a whole succession of other men. Classification is based on an affectively loaded similarity without regard to identity. In delusions, too, such as that of the girl who thinks that she is the Virgin Mary, the wish to be perfect can be connected with one point of similarity, virginity. The same phenomenon is frequent in schizophrenia, in which a belief in regularities is based on coincidences in which there is one tenuous but affectively laden element of similarity.

In considering cases like these one cannot say that the motivational element, as it were, determines the form of thinking; for even at this primitive level of motivation the wish or aversion is connected with the grasp of some feature of a situation that is distinguished. The point, however, is that the distinguishing is very faultily done. There is not a wish for or aversion to an *object* in the full sense of one that is identified by the normal subject-predicate form of thought. The inferences involved fasten on affectively charged similarities but take no account of differences. The cognitive and motivational aspects are bound together. The contrast is not between reason, which is meant to characterize normal rational behaviour, and passion which is a non-cognitive force that disrupts it. It is rather between high-grade type of experience, in which determinately conceived objects are wanted and realistic means taken to obtain them, and low-grade forms of experience, in which behaviour is influenced by wishes and aversions linked with primitive classification and thinking structured by some shadowy principle of affective congruence.

Another type of case which belongs to this family is when we are subject to some kind of emotional reaction. Suppose, for instance, that someone is sitting in a chair and looks up and sees what he takes to be a face at the window and gives an involuntary jump or cry. There are two interesting features of such reactions in extreme cases. On the one hand the perception of the situation tends to be wild and fragmentary as in the cases of paleologic thinking already mentioned; on the other hand the movements made tend to be of a protopathic character, lacking the co-ordination involved in deliberate action. That is why we call such cases emotional reactions; we do not say that the individual is acting out of fear. Cases such as these link very well with the phenomena of vigilance and perceptual defence studied by psychologists. In such cases the individual reacts to stimuli even though they are below the identification threshold. Dember's speculative theory about such reactivity fits in very well with my suggestion of different levels of thinking

each with its own type of affect. He claims that primitive affective responses are learned very early in childhood before children have developed the conceptual apparatus necessary for identification, and can be aroused by stimuli that are not sufficiently informative to arouse the appropriate identification responses.<sup>14</sup> There is a level of thinking and affect which precedes the development of the conceptual apparatus necessary for life as a purposive, rule-following agent and which persists after the development of this apparatus which we associate with 'reason'. The individual thus retains his capacity to react much more 'intuitively' to affectively significant stimuli that are fragmentary and may be well below the threshold of conscious discrimination.

Another type of case, which has a similar explanation, is when a low-grade way of viewing and reacting to a situation interferes with a high-grade way. For instance a man may be teaching a class effectively in accordance with the rules of appropriateness that govern an activity of this sort. An objection is put by one member of the class in what he takes to be a hostile, perhaps derisive tone of voice. He is put off his stroke and reacts quickly with some sarcastic, person-centred reply which does nothing to further the understanding of the point under discussion. His quick, exaggerated reading of the situation follows the line of his underlying feeling of insecurity and leads to his irrational response. He is unable to ignore whatever hostility might lurk behind the question and to carry on with the attempt to determine the truth of the matter under discussion. For this would have presupposed not simply an interest in the question under discussion but also a determination connected with a higher-order concern for truth which was sufficiently strong to outweigh the feelings of insecurity aroused by some slight sign of hostility. Sometimes people are subject to semi-permanent moods which make them prone for days at a time to interpret the behaviour of others in this self-referential way, to fasten on the smallest clues which confirm their attitude of suspicion. In the case of the paranoiac, this attitude of mind is a permanent one. Here again it is not a case of a reasoning process simply being interrupted by an emotional reaction deriving from insecurity. It is a case of a lapse from one level of conduct at which the perception of the situation is structured in terms of one group of passions being replaced by another level of reaction which also has its own cognitive and affective components.

More commonplace phenomena which have a similar type of explanation are those when the judgment is warped or clouded through the influence of some unrecognized way of viewing the situation which leads to weight being given to factors which are

irrelevant or only marginally relevant. The judge gives a faulty weighting to aspects of a case because his aggression or sympathy are aroused; the politician makes a feeble decision because of his need to be loved; flattery leads a business man to overestimate the performance of his secretary.<sup>15</sup>

In such cases it is simple-minded to analyse the situation in terms of dispassionate judgment being clouded by emotion. What we have is not only the presence of passions which sidetrack the individual and lead to distortion of judgment by the intrusion of irrelevant features of the situation. We have also the absence or weakness of passions which help the individual to keep his eye on the ball. These fall into two classes. First, there are those connected with the point of the activity in which the individual is engaged—e.g. the maintenance of justice, the promotion of the public interest, the maximization of profit. Secondly, there are what might be called the rational passions, in the philosophical sense of 'passion', which demand that the individual should stick to the logic of the situation, get his facts right, ignore what is irrelevant, conceive the situation clearly and so on. These latter sorts of passions are of cardinal importance in high-grade experience. They act as monitors maintaining rational thought and action.

The cases so far considered, in which we might talk about behaviour being irrational, have been those in which the lapse from reason is to be explained in terms of a low-grade cognition which is affectively charged. There are other types of case, however, where the defect is not straightforwardly one of the understanding but of will. If we speak of 'will' in this sense, as distinct from the sense in which we talk of people doing things 'at will' or 'willingly', we are drawing attention to the influence on behaviour of beliefs and principles of a settled, usually long-term type. 'Will' is exhibited when people are able to stick to principles, policies and programmes in the face of temptations, ridicule, tiredness and so on. Words such as 'determination', 'resoluteness', 'consistency' and 'integrity' come naturally to mind in such contexts—even 'ruthlessness', if ends are pursued resolutely, but with disregard for the claims of others.

In the literature on 'the will'<sup>16</sup> much is made of the sentiment of self-regard in accounting for this factor of control or 'ego-strength', as it is often called. But, whatever is to be said about the importance of this, there are surely other rather abstract but affectively charged considerations involved as well. Let me take an example to explain what I mean.

The most common case, perhaps, is that in which our condition is a mild form of that to which the psychopath is permanently prone. We want it now. The psychopath is basically a person who cannot

postpone gratification. Intellectually he is aware of the future and of the probability of punishment if he satisfies a wish immediately and in some anti-social way. But this knowledge has for him only a theoretical reality. He thus goes ahead with *immediate rape* instead of waiting until he can find someone who will willingly co-operate. He lies and finds some immediately gratifying way out of a difficulty, or some temporary enhancement of his reputation. There are two important features of this condition. One is the obvious one of lack of strength of moral or social considerations that usually act as a countervailing influence; the other is the defect which prevents the future being real to him. It has been remarked earlier (pp. 210-11) that one of the cardinal features of reasoning is the transcendence of the here and now. This involves not simply the negative axiom of Sidgwick that, other things being equal, mere position in time of a satisfaction is irrelevant, which presupposes some abhorrence of the irrelevant if it is to be operative. It also presupposes something more positive which is central to the use of reason—a determination to take account of the facts. The situation of the psychopath, when the factor of time is left out, is that he discounts the known probability that something most undesirable will happen to him which he does not want at all. He is so overwhelmed by the present that he sees the situation without a proper sense of reality. One of the main passions that lies at the heart of reason is inoperative in his case, which is not simply that one should acquaint oneself with relevant facts but that one should also have a *concern* for them in formulating beliefs or deciding on courses of action. This failure to countenance future facts is the explanation of one class of cases called 'weakness of will', of which the psychopath is an extreme example.

Perhaps the most dramatic cases belonging to this category of lack of control are those of crimes of passion, irresistible impulses, etc. The husband comes home and finds another man in bed with his wife. There is nothing faulty about his understanding of the situation and most people would regard his emotional reaction as quite justified. Its strength and its translation into a motive for action is what leads to the law courts. At least it leads him to the law courts, when he kills the man, instead of the other man in the role of correspondent. Here again what is at fault is his ability to control his immediate response and to let it flow in a delayed and approved institutional channel. The future is not sufficiently manifest to him as something that matters as well as the present.

#### *Unreasonableness*

There are situations in life when it is possible to be rational as distinct from being merely reasonable. If someone wants a holiday,

for instance, it is rational to save a certain amount of money out of every month's salary in order to pay for it. For this is a situation in which reasoning is involved and there are conclusive reasons for acting in one way rather than another. But such situations are less common than those in which we act in a condition of uncertainty about what we want and think worthwhile, and about the best ways of achieving such ends. If, in such situations, we take account of reasons which are the best available in the circumstances, if due attention is paid to considerations produced by others, then we can be said to be reasonable.

Being unreasonable, therefore, is not connected, like being irrational, with a level of life on which reasons get no grip. Rather it is connected with a level of life when there are reasons, but the reasons are of a pretty low-grade sort. It is a level of life in which notions such as 'bias', 'prejudice', 'short-sighted', 'obtuse', 'wilful', 'bigoted' and 'pig-headed' have a natural home. Beliefs, at this level, tend to be infected with particularity. Little attempt is made to fit them into a coherent system and to make sure that they are consistent with each other. In so far as generalizations are employed, there is little attempt to test them, to consider counter-examples. The individual is attached to beliefs that suit him or that are based on authority, hearsay or a narrow range of considerations. The viewpoint of others is not seriously considered. This is especially manifest in social situations where people's claims are at stake. The unreasonable man shows lack of respect for others and is extremely partial and arbitrary in his approach.

In the sphere of the will the same kind of particularity infects the approach of the unreasonable man. He finds difficulty in sticking to a plan or policy because he lacks the capacity to detach himself from the present and to balance a present against a future satisfaction. It is not that the future is more or less unreal to him as it is to the psychopath. Rather the urgency or concreteness of the present particular asserts itself and disrupts his well-meaning plan. This tendency is particularly apparent in the case of conflicts of desires in deliberative situations before a course of action is decided upon. Mabbott points out that many conflicts can be satisfactorily settled by devising a time-schedule. But the unreasonable man finds difficulty in imposing such schedules on himself because he is so dominated by the present and by the concrete. There is probably lacking, too, another affective consideration which often accompanies the use of reason, the love of order, of consistency, of imposing some kind of system. This was very prominent in the Platonic conception of the harmony of the soul. For Plato the passion for order was one of the main features of reason. It is interesting that Freud

also regarded it as one of the main affective sources of civilization.<sup>17</sup>

It has been suggested that being 'unreasonable' is much more a social concept than being 'irrational'. This is so in two senses. First, there is a strong suggestion that the individual in question is egocentric, that he does not pay much attention to the reasons of others. Secondly, while 'irrationality' has been explained largely in terms of the operation in us of a more or less unsocialized level of thinking, when we are subject to infantile wishes and aversions, 'unreasonableness', on the other hand, is connected with a form of behaviour that is exemplified at a primitive level of socialization. The work of Josephine Klein in this field is of interest. She singles out certain abilities which, in the account of reason here given, are intimately connected with it: the ability to abstract and use generalizations, the ability to perceive the world as an ordered universe in which rational action is rewarded, the ability to plan ahead and the ability to exercise self-control. She cites evidence from Luria and Bernstein to show that the extent to which these abilities develop depends on the prevalence of an elaborated form of language, which is found in some strata of society but not in others. She also shows how the beliefs and conduct of some working-class sub-cultures are affected by the arbitrariness of their child-rearing techniques.<sup>18</sup>

To be unreasonable is thus to exemplify or to revert to a level of life which is different from that connected with being irrational. It is similar, however, in that the type of cognition which it exemplifies goes with a distinctive form of motivation. It tends to be 'sense-bound', to be swayed by pleasures and pains of the moment. Emotions, usually of a gusty sort, are aroused only by particular people and situations. Spinoza's account of the state of human bondage is a good description of this level of life.

### *The rational passions*

Josephine Klein is mainly interested in the ways in which the development of language and child-rearing techniques affect the development of cognitive abilities definitive of reason. She sees such abilities as necessary for the operation of forms of motivation associated with prudence and with the desire for achievement. But attention must also be drawn to the importance of specific motivations which accompany the abilities operating at this level of life.

Much has been said in passing about the passions, in the philosophical sense of 'passions', peculiar to the life of reason. It is now time to draw together the threads and say something of a more positive sort. There is a level of conduct connected with the use of reason which is intelligible only on the supposition that we postulate certain



distinctive passions as well as the ability to infer, demonstrate, etc. The obvious overriding one is the concern about truth, without which reasoning in general would be unintelligible. This is articulated in a number of appraisals which are affectively non-neutral. By this I mean that anyone who is concerned about truth must be concerned about correctness—about getting his facts right; he must care about consistency and clarity; he must abhor irrelevance and other forms of arbitrariness; he must value sincerity, and so on. A rational man cannot, without some special explanation, slap his sides and roar with laughter or shrug his shoulders with indifference if he is told that what he says is irrelevant, that his thinking is confused and inconsistent or that it flies in the face of evidence. These passions, of course, are internalizations of principles which give structure and point to theoretical enquiries; but they are also involved in practical activities and judgments in so far as these are conducted in a rational manner.

Ryle gives a very good account of the development of such passions which he associates with the development of 'disciplines':<sup>19</sup>

A person's thinking is subject to disciplines if, for example, he systematically takes precautions against personal bias, tries to improve the orderliness or clarity of his theory, checks his references, his dates or his calculations, listens attentively to his critics, hunts industriously for exceptions to his generalizations, deletes ambiguous, vague or metaphorical expressions from the sinews of his arguments, and so on indefinitely. His thinking is controlled, in high or low degree, by a wide range of quite specific scruples . . .

Now, at last, we can begin to see more clearly than before how the ideas of rationality, reasonableness and reasons are internal to the notion of the thinking that needs to be graded as intellectual work. For this thinking essentially embodies the element of self-correction. Hunch, native sense of direction, following good examples, though indispensable, are no longer enough. The thinker cares, at least a little bit, whether he gets things right or wrong; he is at least slightly concerned to think properly.

Ryle associates these 'scruples', which help people to think properly, with the disciplines of subjects such as history and science which are practised and passed on by special institutions. But surely these 'scruples' are more precise articulations of the more generalized passions which begin to exert an influence when reasoning of a less precise sort gets under weigh, when children's curiosity leads them to ask for explanations, when their early delight in mastery gradu-

ally takes the form of the determination to get things right, and when primitive constructiveness passes into the love of order and system. When children become concerned about what is really there, when they learn to delay gratification with realistic thought about the future, passions are beginning to take hold of them which later become more precisely differentiated in the distinct disciplines.

In the interpersonal and moral spheres, too, which are central to the development of any human being, a corresponding care, scrupulousness and striving for objectivity and consistency can take place and transform more slapdash, sporadic and subjective types of reaction. The attempt to divine people's motives and intentions, to grasp what they are really about, can gradually take the place of a more impressionistic and self-referential reaction to them. Sympathy can pass into a steadier compassion and animal caution into a more reflective prudence.

To describe the transformation of 'natural' passions such as fear, anger and sexual desire would be, more or less, to attempt an Aristotelian analysis of the virtues; but more emphasis would have to be placed on the passionate side of reason than in Aristotle's account. Aristotle, unlike Plato who distinguished a level of desire appropriate to the life of reason, held that reason alone moves nothing. He was not sufficiently aware that the use of reason is a passionate business.

## Notes

- 1 My thanks are due to the Australian National University for the facilities provided for me as a Visiting Fellow which enabled me to write this paper and to those colleagues whose comments enabled me to improve it.
- 2 For detailed defence of some of these points, see J. Bennett, *Rationality*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.
- 3 H. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (Papermac ed.), Macmillan, 1962, p. 381.
- 4 J. Mabbott, 'Reason and desire', *Philosophy*, vol. xxxviii, April 1953, pp. 114-15.
- 5 It might be objected that the delay of gratification is unpleasant, and the longer the delay the more unpleasant it becomes. Apart, therefore, from extrinsic considerations connected with certainty of satisfaction, there are intrinsic considerations to do with the nature of desires that make delay undesirable. But this surely only applies to some desires, to those which Plato termed the 'necessary appetites'—e.g. hunger. Failure to satisfy these is unpleasant. But this does not apply to the normal range of desires—e.g. my desire to go to Greece. If I thought that I could never satisfy this desire that would be unpleasant. But whether I satisfy it next year or in five years' time does not seem to be

- of any great moment. Indeed many postpone the satisfaction of desires because they enjoy the pleasurable anticipation of satisfying them and because the satisfaction is greater at the end of such a build-up. Such considerations show that the case for propinquity in the satisfaction of desires cannot be based purely on the nature of desire. Thus this is not an objection to Sidgwick's main point.
- 6 See J. Klein, *Samples from English Cultures*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, vol. II, pp. 517-26.
  - 7 See B. Bernstein, 'Social class and linguistic development: A theory of social learning', in A. H. Halsey, J. Floud and C. A. Anderson, *Education, Economy and Society*, New York, 1961.
  - 8 See R. S. Peters, 'Emotions, passivity and the place of Freud's theory in psychology', in B. Wolman and E. Nagel (eds), *Scientific Psychology*, New York, 1965.
  - 9 This analysis of 'unreasonableness' owes much to Max Black's paper on 'Reasonableness' (see chap. 11 above). It differs from his analysis mainly in its stress on the social dimension of the concept.
  - 10 See, for example, R. S. Peters, 'Motivation, emotion and the conceptual scheme of common sense', in T. Mischel (ed.), *Human Action*, New York, 1969, p. 145.
  - 11 I have assumed that, in the case of actions, 'unreasonable' and 'irrational' are judgments passed on conduct in relation to some end in view. But can the ends themselves be criticized in these ways? Certainly they can be criticized. They can be condemned as worthless, pernicious, trivial and so on. But can they be criticized as being unreasonable or irrational? 'Unreasonable' suggests always some sort of comparison. If an end is criticized as 'unreasonable' the suggestion is that some kind of monadic myopia is involved. There is inadequate account taken of other people's ends, or of other ends that an individual might have that are more important. There seems, therefore, no problem about criticizing ends as unreasonable. But what about an end being termed irrational? It might, of course, be so termed if it was viewed in a context where its pursuit would frustrate some other end that the agent wanted much more. But could an end be deemed irrational in itself? Only, I suppose, if a man veered towards bringing something about without being able to give any account of the aspect under which it was wanted. Suppose, for instance, that every Thursday a man put every milk-bottle in sight on his garden wall. If we asked him whether he was doing this for target practice, or because he was collecting milk-bottles, or because he enjoyed looking at them there, and to every suggestion he replied 'No, I just want them there on Thursdays', then I think that we might use the word 'irrational' of such an end. For what we call 'ends' of human action must conform to certain general standards. They have to be conceivable objects of interest, concern, enjoyment, approval and so on. If an individual persists in doing something and can produce no aspect under which he views it which makes it intelligible that he should want it, we would, I think, regard such an

end as irrational in itself and one that required some special explanation—e.g. in terms of an unconscious wish or aversion.

- 12 See R. S. Peters, *The Concept of Motivation*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, ch. 3.
- 13 See S. Arieti, *The Intrapsychic Self*, New York, 1967, pp. 109-112.
- 14 W. N. Dember, *The Psychology of Perception*, New York, 1964, pp. 313-25.
- 15 It might be said that such cases are very different from those previously considered because there is nothing particularly low-grade about being angry or sympathetic, needing love and liking admiration. This is perfectly true if a situation is clearly conceived under the aspects appropriate to these emotions, though it is a further question whether they are justifiable or not. But the hypothetical cases of the judge, the politician and the business man are not of this sort. They are cases in which the individual does not clearly or explicitly view the situation under these aspects. He may be only fleetingly aware of them or may refuse to recognize his susceptibility.
- 16 See, for example, J. C. Flugel, *Man, Morals and Society*, Duckworth, 1946, ch. 1.
- 17 S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Hogarth Press, 1930, ch. 3.
- 18 J. Klein, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 487-526.
- 19 G. Ryle, *A Rational Animal*, Athlone Press, 1962, pp. 21-2.

THERE will always be some conditions which must be presupposed in the claim that a certain concept is capable of application in judgments. In most cases, to claim that a judgment is correct presupposes that there is some particular satisfaction of these conditions. For example, to say that we can claim to make any correct judgments at all about physical objects requires that they should have causal relations to one another and to our sensibility. But, furthermore, to claim that some particular physical object can justifiably be said to exist is to presuppose that we can point to some particular satisfaction of these conditions: such as that we can see it, or that it has left a dent in the sand. I shall call concepts of which all this is true *a-concepts*.

But there are other concepts which can sometimes justifiably be applied in judgments where no particular satisfaction of the general conditions of the possibility of their application is claimed. For example, the concept 'pain' would not be capable of being applied in general as a concept of the public language unless there were some publicly determinable conditions, such as behavioural reactions, connected with being in pain. But I do not, in claiming to be able to say correctly that I am in pain, have to satisfy myself that any such publicly determinable conditions are satisfied. I shall call concepts of this second kind *b-concepts*.

In what follows I shall briefly try to rule out theories which treat 'belief' as an *a-concept* or an *a-concept* involving *b-concepts*; I shall then try to show that belief is a *b-concept* which is not reducible to other *b-concepts*; and finally I shall try to deal with the problem to which these claims lead.

To say that to believe is to act as if whatever one believed were true is to treat belief as an *a-concept*. I shall not spend much time on this. It has already been disposed of by Chisholm's arguments in his book *Perceiving*, which I need not repeat. There is nothing against inventing a concept of 'belief' which is explicable entirely in terms of people's behaviour, but this would bear little relation to the concept

ordinarily introduced by the term 'belief'. One thing must be obvious with regard to belief: it is connected in some way with thinking (itself a *b*-concept). People cannot be taken to believe things they have never heard of, or could not think.

However, there are two possible ways of treating belief as an *a*-concept which involves *b*-concepts. One is behavioural: the view that to believe *p* is to have a disposition, to act as if *p* were true in appropriate circumstances, given that *p* is thought of or could be thought of by the agent. Now only the assertion of an identity between my *voluntary* behaviour tendencies and my beliefs would be even remotely plausible. Furthermore, on this theory I will act in one way rather than another in a given situation because of the nature of my needs or wants. Now my voluntary behaviour is not the only behaviour explained by my wants: these would also explain some cases of blushing, trembling, belly-rumbling, etc. Hence my wants cannot be regarded as constituted by my voluntary behaviour. What then is the connexion between my wants and my voluntary behaviour? It is not identity; it is not causality. What is it? The only remaining possibility which is plausible is that it is what I regard it as reasonable or advisable to do: that is, certain of my beliefs. The theory is therefore circular. A similar, and more immediate circularity, is to be found in the alternative way of trying to make belief into an *a*-concept: the view that belief, while requiring the *b*-concept of thinking or entertaining, requires also only the addition of the tendency to assert what is believed. This is immediately circular as it stands, since beliefs can be revealed only by *sincere* assertion, and a sincere assertion is surely nothing but an assertion which one believes to be true. Even if it is insisted that sincere assertion is not a special kind of assertion, but assertion *simpliciter*, whereas insincere assertion is assertion together with special factors which explain its distortion, the circularity is not avoided. For a man asserts what he believes in *what he believes are the appropriate circumstances*: and these in turn cannot be explained in terms of what he has a disposition to assert.<sup>1</sup>

All these theories in their various ways suffer from a criticism which is a direct consequence of trying to represent belief as an *a*-concept. They both misrepresent my knowledge of my beliefs. I may know what I believe without knowing what I am going to assert; and I can have a tendency to assert something—in answering questions impatiently and carelessly, for example—which I at least know is not what I believe. This leads me to what I regard as centrally important to belief, and to something which is vital to my subsequent argument. In an indispensable sense of 'belief', some judgments of the form 'I believe *p*' are incorrigible. I am an

authority on what I believe; I know what I believe, simply in virtue of believing it; and I cannot be mistaken about what I believe in every occasion. That this must be so I must now try to show.

It is of course very often possible to speak of a man as not knowing, or as being mistaken about, what he believes. A man might be said to have certain beliefs all his life which he never formulates to himself; a man may be said to have beliefs while he is asleep, or thinking of something quite other. The theories we have discussed fit these cases best; they claim that to say these things is to say that a man will do or say certain things in certain circumstances. But they fail because they ignore the cases where a man does actually have consciously before him what he believes. In these cases (which some might prefer to call cases of *judgments*) it is not possible to speak of a man as mistaken about what he believes; whereas, on these theories, it should be.

A man who did not believe that any of the apostles denied Christ might quite honestly and sincerely say 'I believe everything that is written in the Bible.' Such a man would not believe that there is any account in the Bible of one of the apostles denying Christ. His mistake about what he believes is not a mistake about what he is currently thinking about and not believing, but about something he is not currently thinking about. He is no more mistaken about what he has consciously in mind than he would be mistaken about what pains he has if he said 'I am feeling all the pains you just mentioned' where one pain had, without his knowledge, been just mentioned and which he did not feel.

Again, we may speak of a man as having believed something all his life which he never managed to formulate or bring to consciousness. One might dispute this, indeed, and say a more precise way of putting the matter is that the man would believe certain things if he formulated them or brought them to consciousness. But in any case, it by no means follows that a man may be mistaken about what he believes when he *has* formulated it or brought it to consciousness.

More difficult are those cases in which one actually denies a knowledge of one's own beliefs: for example when a man says 'I don't know what I believe about the hereafter'; but many of these cases seem to be ones not of belief but of doubt; as one might say equally well 'I don't know what *to* believe about the hereafter' or 'I can't quite make up my mind about the hereafter.' Professor Findlay has pointed out to me an even more difficult case; where a man says 'I believe in immortality' and, asked 'Why then are you so

afraid of death?' and regarding his fear as incompatible with his belief—instead of sensibly reflecting that if there is no hereafter there is nothing to be afraid of—answers, 'Yes; perhaps I don't really believe in immortality.' The case is a strange one. The speaker seems to be standing back from himself and looking at himself as he would at another, applying to himself the same criteria of belief—in terms of action, assertion, etc.—that he would to another. It is like a man who, asked 'Will you marry the girl?', answers by considering the incidence of jilting in his social class, his previous bachelor-like tendencies, etc., instead of simply saying, 'That is my intention.' Another way of dealing with the question 'Do I really believe in immortality?' (given that I also believe that there is more to fear from extinction than from survival) is to say, 'If I do, my fear of death is pathological, to be explained by some ingrained associations or habits'; and then to look at the question of immortality and make up one's mind on it. The doubt about the belief may be that one has forgotten the compelling reasons for believing in it that one had, or perhaps that one never had any, and one is saying, 'Yes, perhaps if I look at the question squarely again I shall admit that there is no immortality: because whatever factors make me afraid to die will when taken properly into account also lead me to think nothing follows death except putrefaction.' At any rate, there is surely a difference between the neurotic pathological fear of a man on a high ladder who knows perfectly well that it will not give way and yet feels insecure, and the state of a man who for good or neurotic reasons actually believes the ladder will give way. Or again, a man might when drunk say with vehemence, 'The South Africans are obviously unfit for self-government and ought to be mandated to Nigeria,' and be told 'You don't really believe that.' On sobering up he might admit that he did not believe it; but he might equally well say 'I don't believe it when I'm sober but I'm convinced of it when drunk.' One of the joys and dangers of being drunk is that all sorts of things which are normally difficult and complicated issues of doubt and questions turn into certain affirmations. Another case is where someone says, 'I believe in the theory of relativity', and is told 'You don't; you don't understand it.' The answer might be, 'Oh yes I do, and I believe it: I believe Einstein was right when he said beauty is in the eye of the beholder and what is morally right depends on local social conditions.' What the man is here mistaken about is what the theory of relativity is, not about what he believes. He believes what he is entertaining, but what he is entertaining is the product of a misunderstanding of what someone else has said. One knows what one believes in so far as one knows what one thinks, and one believes only so far as one thinks: but what one



thinks may not in fact be expressed by or connected with what one says. It would seem that no convincing case can be found of being mistaken about whether one here and now believes something that one is currently thinking. The cases all seem to be one of misreporting beliefs, or of mistaking what one would believe on most occasions or in one's better moments; or of believing something at one time and not at others.

Now, if this is correct, and there are occasions on which 'I believe' is incorrigible, depending on the authority of the speaker, then 'belief' is a *b*-concept. It would seem that the only *b*-concepts for which we have application are those which are incorrigible only in the first person. But if there are to be any *b*-concepts at all, there must be the possibility of their application in a way which is completely dependent on authority; for if they are to be applicable while no particular conditions of their application need be satisfied, it must be the case that *someone* just is able to apply them. All this assumes however, that judgments in which the concept of belief are applied may be true when they are applied incorrigibly. But there appear to be concepts which, while they may be applied in judgments which are either true or false in the third person, are not so applied in first-person judgments. This is true of so-called 'performative' concepts. When I say 'I promise', that I have promised is dependent entirely on my authority, on my saying it, at least in normal cases. But on the other hand 'Is that true?' is not ordinarily a reasonable response to the remark 'I promise'.

Is it possible then that 'I believe' is performative? There is a certain difficulty in saying what a performative utterance is. However, for our purposes I think it will be enough if we define a performative utterance in terms of two factors which apply to the paradigm of all performative utterances: the locution 'I promise'. These are, first, that an utterance is performative if it is not a report of something one is doing, but the actual performance itself. This is too wide, since it would apply to every occasion of making a statement. It may however be narrowed by requiring, secondly, that no utterance is performative unless the fact of its utterance is sufficient for the truth of any statement constructed by changing only the person or the tense of the original utterance or any of its equivalents. Thus, while the utterance itself is the performance, the statements so formed will be true of the performance. For example if I say, 'I promise to do *x*' this is sufficient for the truth of 'Griffiths promises to do *x*' or 'I promised to do *x*'. Now on this criterion it is clear that 'I believe' is not performative. Saying 'I believe' is not necessarily believing, and my saying 'I believe *p*' is not sufficient for the truth of 'Griffiths believes *p*' or 'I believed *p*'. To make a lying promise

is to promise; to make a lying statement of belief is not to believe.

If 'I believe' is not performative, then there would seem to be no alternative to thinking that it is a report of something which is supposed to be the case: a statement of fact, which is known to the speaker without evidence or possibility of mistake. It is, then, a term which introduces a *b*-concept.

Now how can this *b*-concept, of belief, be explicated? Can it, for a start, be reduced to some other *b*-concepts? I shall now discuss what seem to me the only remotely plausible attempts to explain belief in terms of other *b*-concepts. There may be others, and they cannot be disposed of in advance; though it does seem plausible to say, on inspection, that there is nothing in common between the various cases of belief other than the entertaining of the proposition believed.

It has been suggested that to believe *p* is to entertain *p* and at the same time to have a feeling, the concept of which is a *b*-concept, such as a feeling of conviction, or a 'yes' feeling. Now this is simply factually false, if the feeling is supposed to be as obvious to the person that has it as is his belief. I am in many cases of belief unaware of such feelings. If I am now told that this is a result of my introspective ineptitude, and that if I were more skilful I should be able to detect such feelings, I shall reply that while this may be true, it constitutes an admission that we cannot regard belief as reducible to the presence of such feelings. For to apply the concept of belief completely adequately to myself, I need to know of no such feelings, even though I can apparently be brought to an awareness of them by training. I do not attribute beliefs to myself on a basis of my feelings, which are themselves distinct from beliefs. It could still be said that believing is having a feeling, because being in pain is having a feeling and I do not attribute pains to myself on a basis of my feelings—I feel my pains. But this would say nothing, for it does not explain belief in terms of any other concepts (for example, a feeling of conviction or safety) but merely classifies the unanalysable concept of belief as a concept of feeling. This does not damage the concept of belief, but it does a great deal of damage to the concept of feeling: it stretches it painfully.

Any attempt to reduce belief to entertaining *p* while having evidence for *p* must fail on two counts; first, because 'having evidence' must itself involve beliefs about the evidence, and secondly, because people undoubtedly believe things on many occasions without evidence at all. The Cook-Wilsonian account of this matter, however—for example, as it was put forward in a rather amended form by Price (*Proc. Arist. Soc.*, 1934-5)—to some extent escapes

these objections. For what we have been calling belief is on this theory distinguished into three quite different states of mind: knowledge, opinion and taking for granted. Knowledge is what is directly presented to consciousness, about which there can be no mistake; hence 'having evidence' is explained in terms of knowledge, that is that what is given as evidence is the known. Opinion is entertaining a proposition, and having evidence for it; whereas taking for granted is believing something without doubt while one has no evidence for it. Thus, the concept belief has been reduced to three distinct concepts, and 'belief' means *either* knowledge *or* opinion *or* taking for granted.

But we need a concept of belief which is independent of these three. For we often attribute beliefs to people without any knowledge of how they came to acquire them or whether they can be justified. We may say that either these beliefs are formed on evidence or simply taken for granted; but we can identify them as beliefs and as more than mere entertaining without knowing which. But if there were no cognitive state here beyond mere entertaining except either opining or taking for granted, it would be impossible to know that someone believed something without first discovering that it was one rather than the other of the two.

Even if the concept of belief cannot be reduced to any other, it does at least presuppose the concept of entertaining. By entertaining, I do not merely mean understanding: understanding involves a relation to some given expressions, which one may understand or fail to understand; but entertaining a proposition may be mis-understanding another proposition. Entertaining is sometimes defined (e.g., by Price) as thinking of a proposition while not considering its truth, or not considering it true. I see no reason however to limit the concept of entertaining to propositions. Just as it is possible to understand commands, questions, or exclamations, it is possible also to entertain what one understands when one understands them. But it is impossible to believe anything without entertaining a *proposition*, that is to say, it is a condition of believing something that the person who believes should be willing to apply the concept of *truth* to what he believes. There can be no distinction between believing something and believing it to be true, and for every belief the words 'is true' can be added without further justification; and this of course applies to beliefs like '*p* is false': what is believed is that it is true that *p* is false. The object of belief must then be something capable of truth or falsity, such as 'There is no present King of France' or 'The present King of France is bald' or 'All squares have three diagonals'; it cannot be anything like

'Polly put the kettle on' or 'What is the time?' This does not mean that if a man says 'I believe that Polly put the kettle on' or 'It is my convinced opinion that what is the time', he thinks he has a belief and is mistaken: it means that what he says is, as it stands, unintelligible. Either he does not know what the word 'belief' means; or he does believe something such as that Polly is putting the kettle on, or that 'what' is a time between midnight and a minute past midnight, and that that is the time.

But in so far as the request 'Polly put the kettle on' and the question 'What is the time?' can be understood, they can be entertained. The various modes of thought—including willing, wondering and believing—are related to these various kinds of locution. To command something seriously, or seriously to accept a command addressed to oneself, is to will; to question seriously, and to accept a question without replacing it with a statement, is to wonder; to state something seriously, or to accept something seriously, is to believe. But entertaining a command is not willing, nor entertaining a question wondering, nor entertaining a statement believing. These are all concepts of possible modes of thought; but they are intelligible as concepts of the public language only in terms of the variety of objects, such as commands, statements and questions, which distinguish them. None of these objects is what it is apart from the use which a thinking being makes of it; on the other hand, how a thinking being thinks, what distinguishes the modes of his thought, requires for its description these various modes of speech. Thus, that one can believe only that which can be either true or false, and that one cannot believe what is a command or question, is no arbitrary linguistic convention about the meaning of the word 'believe'; it is rooted in the conditions under which it is possible to distinguish one mode of thought from another.

This does not, however, tell us *what* belief is; belief must involve entertaining a proposition, but it must be more than merely entertaining it; but that more cannot be understood in terms of truth, for while believing  $p$  is believing that  $p$  is true, equally, entertaining  $p$  is entertaining that  $p$  is true.

If anything is to be said to explain the concept of belief and its place among other concepts, then it cannot be that belief can be reduced to factors of the kind which fall under *a*-concepts; equally, while it presupposes other *b*-concepts, it cannot be reduced to other *b*-concepts. What other possibilities are there?

An account of belief has recently been published (in Findlay's *Values and Intentions*) which tries to avoid both these kinds of mistakes. Instead of trying to analyse belief in terms of other concepts,

so that every case of belief is a case to which these concepts apply, it tries to show that all the disparate cases of belief can be held together as cases of belief by their relation to the full-blown, paradigm cases of belief which can be explicated in terms of other concepts. The paradigm case expresses the essence of belief; but this essence is not necessarily to be found in every particular case of belief, rather as the Platonic forms are only imperfectly reflected in particulars, or as the whole nature of a monad is only foreshadowed by its state at any one time.

The full cases of belief may be distinguished from mere entertaining in the following way, Findlay says. Generally speaking, the content of our entertaining—the meaning of something we assert as entertained for example—can be exhausted by a limited description. Thus, in entertaining the proposition that the cat is on the mat, I can be taken to be thinking no more than that an animal of a certain appearance is sitting on a covered bit of floor. In thinking this I think nothing about the condition of the air surrounding the cat, nothing about what the animal will do next, nothing about its origins; nor do I need to do so in order to grasp completely adequately what is meant by saying 'The cat is on the mat'. But if I believe the cat is on the mat, I will be astonished to find that the temperature of the air surrounding the cat is a million degrees centigrade, or that there is no air in the room, or that the previous history of the cat is that of a dog, or that in a few moments the cat will get up and fly away. I cannot specify in advance all the ways in which conditions may surprise me if I believe that the cat is on the mat: but in believing I am ready to meet the non-surprising conditions rather than the surprising ones. Findlay puts it, 'I swallow with what I believe the absence of all the things which would disallow or exclude it, and am favourably disposed to all the things not otherwise disallowed that would bear favourably upon it, no matter how vague my conception of such circumstances may be.' Furthermore, I must be ready to match my belief against anything: I can rule out nothing as possibly relevant to it, and hence the system of belief must be an all-embracing system. It would of course be circular if this meant that belief is what we require to accord with other beliefs. Certainly our beliefs must do this, but they must initially and primarily fit in with and anticipate what Findlay calls the 'background of compulsive experience'—experience whose unavoidability is palpable, which means, for us, mainly, though not exclusively, sense-experience. Nor does this theory distinguish belief by its content: *what* is believed is the same as what is entertained: but in believing we are *also* ready to meet other beliefs and experience in a certain way.

Now, whether or not this is a convincing description of the most full-blown cases of belief, it is certainly not a description of very many actual cases of belief. One may believe things in the teeth of one's compulsive experience. Findlay says, 'while belief may be manifest in a wide range of impoverished, blunted and denatured forms, such as some analysts have loved to dwell upon, they only qualify for membership in the belief-family because of their graded approximation to a form which is, as it were, the fountain and origin of the whole set, which exemplifies belief in its most perfect form, as the finished portrait of which they are merely sketches.' Thus Tertullian, he says, 'may have believed something *because it was absurd, but he could only do so because he and countless others had formed their beliefs less abnormally*'.

Findlay cannot mean to deny that absurd beliefs, beliefs inadequately based, beliefs unconnected with one's other beliefs and which may even contradict them, are beliefs at all. It would be a mistake to say that they are quasi-beliefs. To those who have them they are as fully and completely beliefs as any others. They are not good beliefs, or desirable or sensible beliefs, but they are perfect beliefs in the sense that they undoubtedly count as beliefs. They are not all a belief should be, but they are what a belief is. Now what is the principle of unity which allows us to identify all these as beliefs? It is not that all these cases can be understood as coming under some other concepts, of an *a*- or *b*-kind. But Findlay's answer is that they all have a 'graded approximation' to the full case, the essence, he has described. There are two difficulties, of quite different kinds, in this.

First, how is the more unfavoured case of belief distinct from merely entertaining? It itself has none of the marks of the favoured case: then why is it a case of unfavoured belief, rather than not a case of belief at all? The only answer I could give that question is that its holder says it is a belief: that one knows when one believes, and this (together with the demand that what is believed is a proposition) is the absolutely apodeictic requirement that the concept makes. Yet the search for internal marks to distinguish all cases of belief is fruitless: there is nothing in common between beliefs that is not shared by non-beliefs, and Findlay's relation between unfavoured and favoured beliefs is not one that is perceived or indeed which even exists when the favoured kind of beliefs are not there. The only kind of position we can take is therefore that our knowledge of what we believe is not a knowledge of something with internal marks. How, then, *do* we know what we believe? The question seems demanded because we want to make all cases of knowing like those common public ones, where an object is

discriminated and can be described. But not all cases of knowledge are like this. I do not know of my bodily movements by making inferences from physical sensation (cf. Anscombe, *Intention*, on this) but I do know (though I can be mistaken about) my bodily movements. I know of my intentions, and that I intend, without inspecting some quasi-substantial velleities. There is even something rather odd of speaking of knowing what my pains are like by inspecting their internal nature, rather than simply saying I have the pain or am in pain. All these cases are very different, and very different from belief: but their very differences should teach us not to force them, and the case of belief, into the single mould of perceptual discrimination of external objects. Belief is a discriminable mode of consciousness, but that does not mean that it must be discriminable in the way that a timbre or a dark streak on a wall is discriminable. It is discriminable in the way that modes of consciousness, such as doubting, willing and wondering are all discriminable modes of consciousness, and this is something of its own sort.

My point is that if this account—or mere classification—of belief as a mode of consciousness is thought to say nothing and provide no answer, it is still preferable to the other theories discussed. For while the behaviourist theory provides a very clear and full answer, it is a false one, and if I say nothing, I at least say nothing false; whereas while I would not say that Findlay's answer is false, it too does not provide an answer. For the question, 'What tells me that any belief is a belief?' is not answered by saying, 'Because it somehow lives in a belief-family which is identified by its head'; what then marks the subordinate and unfavoured cases as members of the belief family? Certainly neither consanguinity nor legal adoption.

My second objection to Findlay's theory is that it is, if true, only a detailed and articulated insight: that is, it tells us 'clearly belief in the most favoured sense is so-and-so, in detail'; but that does not tell us why it is so, why it must be so, and why this must be the most favoured case. As an insight, it need not be mistaken: but we require a deduction as well as an exposition of such a concept. It is a condition of the application of the concept of belief in the non-favoured cases that we should be unhesitating in applying it to the favoured cases: but that this is a condition and a necessary one requires to be shown.

I am concerned with the question, 'What kind of concept is belief?' That question is not the same precisely as the question, 'What is belief?' for the upshot of the investigation so far is that belief is the kind of concept which makes the question, 'What is belief?' unanswerable, at least in so far as it requests a general description

which will cover all cases of belief and nothing else. But the matter cannot possibly rest there. For a concept of which this was all that can be said might be a *possible concept*, but never a concept which could ever be attributed to anyone. A man who said, 'I have a strange concept of something which is connected with nothing else and which I simply know when to apply as I know how to apply the concepts of pain, willing, feeling happy, etc.' could not only not simply be taken at his word, but would be in no position to take *himself* at his word: for the difficulty is not in saying whether what he says is true, but in saying *what* he is saying. And certainly the concept of belief is not only applicable with authority to ourselves, but with confidence to others. We are able to tell, if not incorrigibly, what others believe. 'Belief' introduces a concept in the public language. For this to be possible there must be more that we can say about the nature of the concept. So far as belief is a *b*-concept and a concept of the public language, it is necessary not only that it should be applicable as a *b*-concept, incorrigibly, to oneself, but also it must be applicable outside the first person, and such application will require justification in terms of conditions which are expressible only in the third person, and hence require application of *a*-concepts. The problem of other minds is largely the problem of how *b*-concepts are capable of use in this way, as if they were *a*-concepts. How, in particular, this is possible in the case of the concept of belief is our problem. For in order that it should be possible, there must be some kind of *necessary* connexions, and not merely contingent ones, with *a*-concepts. That is, the concept of belief as one in the public language could not be applied at all, unless there were in general conditions coming under *a*-concepts which were able to justify its application to others. The connexion between belief and such conditions—between belief and observable assertion and action, for example—is not like the connexion between belief and the pulse-rate, so that lying makes one's heart beat faster. They are not, like that, discovered (and we thus dispose of all simple arguments from analogy in dealing with the problem of other minds), but connexions which must be presupposed for any such discoveries to be possible. There must be general conditions which count as evidence (which however may be overridden by first person testimony) for its correct application to others. *But what we have so far observed seems to make this question unanswerable: belief is not explicable in terms of other concepts, such as assertion, action or evidence: so how can there be any necessary connexions between these and belief?*

That is my problem, and what follows I hope is some kind of answer.



There is one further way in which a connexion may be made between belief on the one hand and evidence, assertion and action on the other. It is this. Belief, we have seen, is somehow connected with truth: for the mode of consciousness called belief is distinguishable from other modes of consciousness only in terms of modes of language, in terms of statements rather than commands or questions. But of course what is believed is not thereby true; it is only thereby something which is either true or false. But it is *wrong* to believe what is false, and *right* to believe what is true. Whatever else one does with a truth, believing the proposition that expresses it is the first and most fitting thing to do with it—before we start deploring it or trying to alter it, for example. The connexion between belief and truth is that belief is *appropriate* to truth; it is proper only when it is of what is true, and only intelligible, therefore, when it is of what *could* be true.<sup>2</sup>

To say this is not to say *what* belief is, nor is it to establish any necessary connexion between belief and any *actual* condition. It establishes a connexion which does not necessarily, but which *ought* to hold; it is what we demand of belief, whether or not we expect it. But that what is true ought to be believed is not something which we have discovered to be so, that might have been otherwise, as we might discover that roses ought to be pruned. Because demanding this of belief is the only condition which makes it a possible concept of the public language. To say, 'Belief is appropriate to truth' is to answer the question, 'How is belief identified as a public concept? How are we able to pick out belief and talk about it in common?'

It is only this tenuous connexion which reached out from the unanalysable private state of mind to the public world. It is enough, however, to explain the connexions with evidence, assertion, etc., which puzzled us. The connexion with assertion is that belief is the appropriate attitude to truth and the inappropriate attitude to falsity. It is a mode of consciousness, therefore, that can be picked out only in terms of that which may be true or false, in terms of assertions rather than commands or exclamations. The connexion with evidence is a consequence of this. The conditions of the appropriateness of the assertion of truth (where the truth, as opposed to the politeness or the relevance of a remark is in question) must themselves be conditions of the appropriateness of belief; for what is appropriate in a given situation is appropriate when that situation is demanded by some further conditions. Again, if it is appropriate to believe *p* only when *p*, and if it is appropriate to do *x* when *p*, then it is appropriate to do *x* when believing *p*. This explains the connexion between belief and action, and also the direction we

normally think this dependence takes: action waits on belief, and belief waits on evidence.

This also explains the necessity for those paradigm cases which Findlay takes to constitute the most favoured cases of belief. If these cases of belief were not belief at all, then we are not counting as belief the attitude of mind which we would expect to be present when the truth is most compellingly manifest, when the conditions for the assertion of truth are best satisfied. It would be possible, I suppose, for Tertullian to bring up children so that they said 'I believe' not only of the ridiculous things he believed, but of and only of every ridiculous thing. But what would they be saying of themselves when they said they believed? There would be no possible ground in this case for saying that they were using the word 'belief' in our sense at all: that whatever, if anything, they were saying of themselves, we could not identify it with that which we say when *we* say 'I believe' of ourselves. People brought up to speak in this way would deny that they believe in cases where the appropriateness of the assertion of truth is most clearly exhibited to them as well as to us; and they would insist they believe in those cases where by their own and our standards the assertion of truth is least appropriate. It would be most plausible to say that what they meant by 'I believe *p*' is 'I think *p* is ridiculous'. If they denied this, however (and we could somehow take at its face value the assertion of the denial) we should not know what to say: are their standards of appropriateness of the assertion of truth different from ours? And if so what are they standards of—are they standards of truth any more? To say such things makes it impossible for us to say not only that they accept the standards of appropriateness that we accept, but what it is they are accepting or thinking. We certainly have no right to speak of belief in their case. The acceptance of such standards of appropriateness, then, by others, is a necessary condition of the propriety of our attributing the concept of belief—let alone belief itself—to them. And the existence of the paradigm cases is all that allows us to say that they do accept such standards. (Of course, it is equally much a condition of our applying these concepts to ourselves: but there would not be much sense in doubting whether or not we ourselves accept such standards.)

I should make it clear that I am not arguing that belief *becomes* a concept of the public language by our demanding that it shall be of what is true. I do not want to say: there is first the concept of belief which is the concept of a purely private object, and this concept becomes public by the demand that we make that what is true shall be believed and what is false shall not. A purely private concept would have to be one which had no possible application

beyond the first person, that is, one whose application was never dependent on conditions which come under *a*-concepts. But if so it is difficult to see how any purely private concept could *ever* become public: for its connexion with public conditions would be in *every* case contingent: so that taking any public condition as evidence of the correctness of its application would always be a pure assumption no better than any other. These difficulties are additional to the prior one that is involved in speaking of the possibility of a private language, that is, of the possibility of the application in general of any private concepts whatsoever.

What I am arguing is that the concept of belief is only possible *at all*—since it is a concept in the public language—if we suppose standards of appropriateness which link belief with what is believed. It follows that any qualitative characteristics that one may associate with belief cannot be essential for its identification; it is for this reason that we cannot say that belief is necessarily a feeling. On the other hand it is a mode of consciousness. Though not essentially marked by a difference of quality, it is not merely nothing for us.

I have said that belief is one mode of consciousness where *will* is another. It should be possible to say similar things about will. The first-person statements 'I intend', 'I mean to', etc., are in an important range of cases incorrigible, and apparent counter-examples may be dealt with in a similar way to those encountered in discussing belief. Attempts to explain willing as an *a*-concept—to reduce it to a tendency to act for example—would be on the same kind of shoals as attempts to explain belief as an *a*-concept. It would involve either circularity or misrepresent the concept of will as always corrigible in its first-person application. Will cannot be reduced to any set of *b*-concepts; but it can be picked out only in relation to commands, expressions of intentions, etc.; it consists in thinking these seriously. But how can we distinguish thinking them seriously from merely entertaining them? What is the difference between intending to do something and merely dwelling on the idea of it? I should argue that will or intention is what we demand of possible actions that are right, as belief is what we demand of possible propositions that are true. This means that the concept of intention or will would be impossible unless in general we regarded it as appropriate to do what is right, that is unless we were able to distinguish actions according to some criteria which allowed us to speak of reasons for doing one thing rather than another.

If this is so, then people can be spoken of as acting with intention, or as willing, in general, only so far as they are conceived as thinking things right. But it may also be argued<sup>3</sup> that the concept of what it is

## *On belief*

right to do or what there are reasons for doing is applicable to people only in so far as they in general tend to do what they believe is right (divergences requiring special explanation). That there can be said to be such a thing as will or intention (i.e. that the concept of will or intention can ever be applied) requires publicly intelligible standards of correct behaviour and an actual tendency to follow them: something like a human nature, so to speak. Similarly, one can speak of people as believing only so far as they can be conceived as thinking things true, and as accepting criteria which enable them to distinguish the false from the true. But one could speak of people as accepting these criteria of truth only in so far as in general they are willing to assert (that is, do assert unless there are some special reasons for not doing so) what these criteria demand, on occasions when assertion is in place. And this means that there could not be said to be such a thing as belief, unless there were publicly intelligible standards of evidence and an actual tendency to use them: something like common sense, so to speak.

## Notes

- 1 This argument will not do, because it requires two premises which are false. It requires that if my voluntary behaviour is explained by my wants, then I must have beliefs about what is reasonable or advisable to do; and that if a man sincerely asserts something, he must have beliefs about what are the appropriate circumstances for doing so. But consider the case of a young child who could sincerely assert 'There's an apple' and voluntarily reach out for it because he wants it, without having the concepts 'appropriate to assert' or 'reasonable or advisable to do', and, hence, no beliefs involving them.
- 2 Cf. Willing is the attitude which is appropriate to actions which are right: it is only proper when it is of what is right, and only intelligible therefore when it is of what could be right—that is, actions.
- 3 As I did in 'Acting with Reason', *Philosophical Quarterly*, no. 33, 1958.

ONE of Wittgenstein's most important remarks in his *Philosophical Investigations* is the one to the effect that if language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement in judgments as well as agreement in definitions.<sup>1</sup> If people are to understand each other, they must not only understand the words that other people use, in the sense that they could possibly provide a translation of those words into other words; they must also have some appreciation of the circumstances in which those words might properly be given application. To put it another way—an understanding of what men say involves not only an understanding of the individual words that they use (something that might be expressed in definitions) but also the criteria of truth of the statements that they make by means of those words (something that implies agreement on the circumstances in which those statements might be said to be true). There are thus certain conceptual connexions between the concepts of meaning, truth and agreement; to understand these connexions is to go some way towards an understanding of the notion of objectivity itself.

The notion of objectivity has been often misunderstood, and it will therefore be as well first to make clear what objectivity is *not*. In the first place objectivity cannot be equated with truth. To say that a point of view is an objective one, is not to say that it is true or valid, although there would indeed be an oddity in the suggestion that objective points of view or objective statements concerning a particular matter of fact were never true. The objective is to be contrasted with the subjective, the idiosyncratic or the prejudiced; it indicates a certain approach to the truth rather than the truth itself. To be objective implies an interest in the truth itself and not in how the truth might be regarded from certain personal or subjective points of view. Of course an impartial interest in the truth may not be enough to ensure that truth is attained, and for that reason there is no contradiction in the idea that something that purports in all honesty to be an objective statement of the facts may after all be false. Moreover, someone may be entirely objective

## Objectivity

without succeeding in stating the truth. On the other hand, to say that a statement, belief or point of view is objective is to rule out certain obstacles to truth, obstacles such as those mentioned above—subjectivity, idiosyncrasy or prejudice. It is for this reason that there would be an oddity in the suggestion that objectivity never led to truth. To speak of objectivity is thus to be concerned with *certain* of the normal conditions for the attainment of truth, not with the attainment of truth as such.

If objectivity cannot be identified with the attainment of truth as such, it is even more true that it cannot be identified with the attainment of truth of a particular kind, e.g. scientific truth, or truth which can be ascertained by procedures such as observation. This is particularly important in the light of the existence of subject-matters such as art and morals in which truth, where it exists, is not to be ascertained by observation or any of the procedures available to science. It has sometimes been assumed that ethics and aesthetics cannot have any concern with objectivity, just for this reason, and it is certainly the case that many of the assertions of the subjectivity of ethics that were commonplace in the hey-day of positivism were made in the light of the fact that ethical statements cannot be verified in the ways that seem obvious for observational or scientific statements. That there must be *some* procedure for attainment of truth in morals and art is clear enough, at any rate to the extent that truth is available at all in these fields. I make this last qualification only because in certain disciplines 'What is the truth?' may be a very difficult question, and we may sometimes have to content ourselves with guesses or even the realization that we do not know what is true. None of this, however, is an objection to the idea of truth having a place at all in these disciplines; *a fortiori*, it is not an objection to the idea of the attainment of truth in principle.

Nevertheless, there is a temptation, where procedures for the attainment of truth do not lie obviously to hand, to look for the criteria of objectivity simply in general agreement or even in the majority decision; in which case the objectivity of, say, an aesthetic judgment can be assumed if there is general agreement upon it, or agreement on the part of the *cognoscenti*, or even the agreement of the majority. I have already emphasized the part that general agreement plays in our idea of objectivity but it cannot be the case that objectivity and general agreement are to be identified, if only for the reason that there is no contradiction in the position that what people are generally agreed upon may be false or that people generally may have come to adopt an attitude towards the truth for some reason which is other than that which can be called objective. Nevertheless, it may still seem plausible that there is a *prima facie*

case to be made for that on which there is in fact general agreement, and that general agreement does enter into our concept of objectivity at some point and in some way. To accept this is not just to embrace a form of conservatism; it is not to show an unwillingness to suppose that minority views may after all be right. In many cases minority views may be, and often are, right. But it is a totally different matter to suppose that they might always be right, and that what is generally agreed upon always lacks objectivity. The matter might perhaps be put by saying that where the majority are wrong on a given issue there is a case for saying that they are not only simply wrong on the facts, they also lack understanding. If the majority were always wrong they would always lack understanding. This might be conceivable when restricted to a given issue; on abstruse matters of scientific fact it might well be the case that the majority of people would be wrong in their judgments and it would equally be true that they lacked understanding. But again, when the matter is generalized, the supposition would be that people just do not understand the language they speak. If this is the case with regard to the supposition that the majority might always be wrong it is equally the case with regard to the supposition that what the majority think always lacks objectivity. This latter supposition implies not just an absence of truth but, as a reason for this, the absence of a concern for the truth, or at any rate the absence of circumstances in which truth is to be attained. But if people are to understand the language which they speak they must know something of the circumstances in which the statements that they make are true; that is to say that they must know the criteria of truth of those statements. Thus certain of the conditions necessary for the attainment of truth and thereby of objectivity will be present, and subject to the absence of other factors weighing against objectivity, there will be reason to think that objectivity holds good.

The connexion between meaning, understanding and objectivity can be brought out in another way. I spoke just now about other factors weighing against objectivity and I spoke earlier about the states which can be opposed to objectivity and constitute obstacles to truth—subjectivity, idiosyncrasy and prejudice. These terms, however, suggest comparatively isolated factors weighing against objectivity; they seem to imply exceptions to the general rule. For idiosyncrasy is by definition something that applies to individuals only; prejudice implies a deviation from the standard norm, and even subjectivity has something of the same implications. But in a situation such as that portrayed in Orwell's *1984* objectivity is supposed to be totally lacking, because the conditions for attainment of truth are made to be totally absent. People in such a situation

## Objectivity

would not be in the position to know what the truth is over large areas of what concerns them. Not only this, but they would not know the criteria of truth appropriate to these concerns, since they would have no idea of the circumstances in which statements from these fields might be said to be true. It might be replied here that they do know this in a sense, since they are told what to think. But this implies the possibility of questioning what they are told, of asking whether a statement is really true in these circumstances, and so on. In 1984 this was supposed to be excluded in a variety of ways—sometimes by insistence on belief in whatever was the current orthodoxy, sometimes by attempts to change the apparent facts (e.g. by altering the history books). In the circumstances, one would have every right to say that the people involved could have no understanding of what they were required to believe. (It is no coincidence that Orwell introduces in this connexion the idea of Newspeak—for the function of a change of language of this kind is the confusion of the understanding.) Indeed, the point of brainwashing is the same; its efficacy results not so much from the production of beliefs, as in indoctrination, but from the confusion of mind set up by its means. The effect is a confusion of the understanding, so that the subject grasps at any straw which may provide a kind of certainty, a point of reference; he has thus to accept the only thing that he can now understand. There is for this reason a world of difference between indoctrination and brainwashing, and Orwell, with great percipience, knew this. The possibility of objectivity is excluded only where understanding is excluded also; in indoctrination understanding is not excluded, even if it is sometimes made difficult, and for that reason the possibility of objectivity is not excluded either.

*I have so far discussed these issues only in the most general terms, and I must now come down to detail (and perhaps, some might say, to earth too). Let us take the case of colours, which provides a comparatively simple and direct instance on which we may focus the question of the criteria of objectivity. It seems evident enough that the question of what colour a thing has can be settled in most cases without much difficulty, and that there is an objective answer to that question. That is to say that the attribution of colours to things is not a subjective matter; it is not a matter for individual decision despite the fact that the question of what colour a thing has brings in perception, and despite the fact that people may vary to some extent in their perception of colours (some people, of course, being colourblind). It is important to emphasize this point concerning the possible objectivity of colour attributions, since there has been some*



tendency in the history of philosophy to argue against it. Locke and the British Empiricists in particular tended to assimilate colours to things like feelings of pain or other subjective feelings, on the ground that our perception of colour varies according to the circumstances. But the fact that perception of colour takes place under conditions which are variable does nothing to undermine the objectivity of colour judgments in general. Indeed all perception takes place under conditions, but certain conditions constitute the normal conditions for perception of colour and it is against an understanding of what counts as this that colour attributions are to be assessed and understood. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> it is a necessary truth that people normally see red things as red or that something is red if and only if it is seen as red under normal conditions. Nevertheless the temptation to say that colours are not objective properties of things is strong, especially given that our understanding of colour is so closely and intimately connected with our understanding of certain forms of perception. We should indeed have no understanding of colour apart from those forms of perception and for this reason the concept of colour has been recently called an 'anthropocentric concept'.<sup>3</sup> Let us give way to this temptation a little, at least to the extent of being prepared to raise the question how it can be, if colour attribution depends on certain forms and conditions of perception, that colour attribution can be objective.

It has first to be asked what is being supposed to the contrary when doubt is being cast on the possibility of objective colour judgments. It is not of course that colour judgments are all supposed to be prejudiced or idiosyncratic; it is not *this* contrast with the objective that is under consideration. It is that, despite what *appears* to be the case with colour judgments, they are all in a curious sense subjective,<sup>4</sup> in that none of them have any real application to anything in the world. Hence there cannot really be criteria of truth for a judgment of the form 'that is red'. Indeed, truth cannot properly enter into the matter. Yet of course we do speak of things being red and we claim to understand each other when we say things of this kind. How is this possible if judgments concerning colour have no claim to objectivity? It might be said that it just happens that we apply the same word to the same subjective experience and so get along. Indeed Russell makes a supposition of this kind in his 'Philosophy of logical atomism',<sup>5</sup> when he argues that what we each of us understand even by expressions like 'Piccadilly' is different, since the experiences which each of us has of Piccadilly are all different and private. We get along, he says, because language is intrinsically ambiguous; the word 'Piccadilly' does mean something different for each of us, but it is this very point which in a

spoke is agreement over the application of a concept, agreement over the point of application without which our understanding of the concept would be empty or merely formal. A blind man might have a formal understanding of the concept of colour, in that he might be able to give some account of the relation of colour to other concepts, and of the relation of particular colours to each other. He might indeed understand something of the analogies which exist between colours and the objects of other experiences, such as those of hearing.<sup>6</sup> But a blind man is not in the position to give application to his concept of colour by picking out objects of different colour by the means which is essential to a full understanding of colour—vision. Thus the concept of colour requires (to use another Wittgensteinian term) perceptual criteria. The Wittgensteinian notion of a criterion (to the extent that there is one such notion to be found in his writings) is one with which philosophers are familiar in connexion with our understanding of private states of mind, particularly that of pain. Wittgenstein indeed asserts in one passage which has acquired a certain notoriety<sup>7</sup> that an inner state stands in need of an outward criterion. This can be put by saying that we could not have any understanding of such an inner state without a public point of reference in connexion with which the concept can be given application. Thus the remarks about criteria have a certain connexion with my opening quotation about the necessity for agreement in judgments. But in a sense the point that pain, for example, requires for our understanding of the concept criteria in the form of what might be called 'pain-behaviour', certain typical or characteristic expressions of pain in behavioural form, works in the opposite direction to the point that colours require perceptual criteria; or so it might seem at first sight. For it might seem that in the pain case it is the private that requires public criteria in the form of behaviour, while in the colour case it is the public that requires criteria in something which if it is not private itself has a private aspect—perception.

There is no real inconsistency or incoherence here. In the first place, as is implicit in what I have just said, and as was recognized earlier, the concept of perception is not simply the concept of a private experience, however much a private experience is involved at a certain point. The concept of perception is already linked through the concept of its object with a public world. This can be seen from the fact that the idea of seeing something as red would be unintelligible unless the idea of something being red was already understood. In the second place, the notion of a criterion is not something that is meant to provide a special key to the problem of the intelligibility of concepts of private experiences, even if it has a

## Objectivity

special pertinence in that connexion. All concepts need criteria, not merely concepts like that of pain. If we feel that there is a special problem about the concept of pain it is because of the *prima facie* difficulty in the idea of a public point of reference for something that is essentially private. That is why Wittgenstein finds the public criterion in certain forms of behaviour, which are public objects of perception. If 'colour experience' was the name of a type of experience of the same kind as pain, we should require the same kind of behavioural criterion for it. But the fact is that there are great differences between the concepts of 'colour experience' and 'pain'; differences which Wittgenstein would have described as differences in their *grammar*. In the expression 'colour experience' the word 'colour' serves to pick out the kind of *object* which the experience has—something that does not apply to the expression 'pain' at all. The reference to an object of this kind is, as we have already seen, impossible without a prior understanding of a world of such objects. Nevertheless an understanding of the concept of objects of such experiences, e.g. colour, requires an understanding of what constitutes a point of application for such a concept; and this is impossible without the relevant kind of perception. Thus to understand the criterion for a concept is to understand what constitutes the conditions in which the concept is properly given application, and these conditions must be something that can be understood by all of us, and therefore they must be public.

I have spoken of 'the conditions in which the concept is properly given application'. This implies that behind each concept there are other concepts connected with it, such that the one cannot properly be understood without the other. This may in turn suggest two objections 1. that there is a circularity involved and 2. that the whole idea is normative. The circularity may be apparent in the assertion that the concept of pain implies the concept of pain behaviour, but what constitutes pain behaviour is not to be determined without an understanding of what pain is. Similarly, the concept of, for example, red implies the concept of seeing things as red, but what constitutes seeing something as red cannot be determined without an understanding of what red is. The normative is apparent in the use of the word 'properly'. Surely if we speak of the proper understanding of something, we are making some kind of recommendation: we are not simply saying what the case is. In fact, however, while these two objections would be pertinent if they were taken separately, they provide a kind of mutual justification when taken together. It is perfectly true that we cannot lay down in advance of an understanding of the concept of pain what is to count as pain behaviour. I spoke earlier of pain behaviour as the 'typical or

characteristic expression of pain'; this itself suggests that the behaviour in question can be specified only in terms of what is normal. It is thus the reference to what is normal, characteristic, typical or required for a proper understanding of the concept that preserves the thesis about the necessity for criteria from an accusation of circularity. On the other hand, when it is realized that one needs reference to normal expressions of pain in order to establish the connexion between pain and behaviour necessary for any understanding of a public concept of pain, the accusation that the whole idea is normative loses its force. There can be no necessary connexion between a feeling and a limited range of behaviour, since our ability and freedom to behave in different ways in different circumstances prevents that necessity. On the other hand, a simply contingent relation would rob the concept of pain of any intelligibility that it has, since we need a connexion between the concepts of pain and behaviour if the concepts are to be viable as concepts. Thus the reference to the normal indicates how the understanding of the world which we develop involves a kind of compromise. This compromise is between the 'ideal' connexions between concepts which an abstract understanding demands, and a looser connexion between the things which fall under the concepts, which is demanded by the variability of the facts in different conditions. Understanding the world involves an attempt to impose upon it a kind of superstructure of concepts; but the structure of the superstructure must always be tighter than that of the facts, if the kind of restructuring necessary for understanding is to be carried out. Reference to the normal is essential if that superstructure is to be given any application at all.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, to come back to the example of colours from which I started, our understanding of, say, red must inevitably involve reference to what is seen as red under normal conditions, and this in turn involves reference to normal observers and normal vision. It must in consequence seem that our conception of what is normal might change, and thereby our concept of colour itself. It is of course true that our concepts do develop and sometimes change, and it is also true that the whole development of scientific knowledge depends upon this. Any philosophical view which seems to prohibit this must be wrong. But it is equally wrong to suppose that our understanding can be entirely free from the facts. It is not open to us to develop and alter our conception of colour in any direction that we choose. I started this part of my enquiry in order to see to what extent and why the concept of colour could be construed as an anthropocentric concept. It should have become clear that the concept presupposes indeed certain references to human beings and

## Objectivity

their powers of perception; it is not, however, anthropocentric in the sense that it is man-made in a way that suggests anything arbitrary about it. There is the possibility of objectivity in our colour attributions despite the normative aspects of the concept of colour. It may be suggested that this is due to what is in a way true—that questions about objectivity can be raised only from within a system of concepts, only against the background of an already accepted system of understanding. But to speak simply of a system of concepts or a conceptual scheme may suggest that alternative systems, alternative conceptual schemes, might be adopted, perhaps as the result of new pressures. This kind of suggestion seems to be made in what is otherwise an admirable account of the situation in Bruce Aune's *Knowledge, Mind and Nature*. Chapter 5 of that book contains what seems to me one of the best accounts written about the Wittgensteinian notion of criteria, but Aune seems to give too little weight to another Wittgensteinian notion which it is important to mention in this connexion—that of a form of life.

Much of Wittgenstein's argument against the idea that we can derive the concept of pain from the sensation itself without reference to criteria can be construed as an argument against the idea that we are 'given' things in experience itself, as is implicit in the notion of sense-data. Yet in one place at least<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein uses this very notion of the 'given', not in connexion with the immediate 'deliverances of the senses', but in connexion with forms of life. It is forms of life, he says, which are in a sense the 'given'. The point could be put in other ways by saying that forms of life constitute the anchoring points for conceptual systems, and thus prevent the complete amendment and abandonment of that conceptual scheme which we at present operate with. They provide the obstacle to the acceptance of complete conventionalism which might otherwise seem possible. How we conceptualize our understanding of the world is not completely a matter of convention. Otherwise, if questions about objectivity can be raised only from within a system of concepts, the question about what is objective might itself seem a conventional one, and objectivity would thus after all reduce to what is agreed upon, despite what I argued earlier. Forms of life constitute what is not a matter of convention, not simply a matter of agreement, and thus something not negotiable, as it were. But what are forms of life?

As far as Wittgenstein himself is concerned this is a difficult and disputed question, but I think that some light can be cast on the question as far as it affects our problems by considering once again the example of colour. Why is it not simply a matter of convention what colours are what? This is in effect the same question as the one

I considered earlier when I was concerned with the normative aspect of the notion of a criterion. The answer is that it is not simply a matter of convention because it is not a matter of convention that human beings are what they are and have the perceptual apparatus they have; and it is not a matter of convention that the world is as it is and that things affect our senses in the way that they do. This again has a counterpart in Kant's philosophy. I spoke earlier of Kant's dictum about the relation between concepts and intuitions and their mutual dependence. Kant also invokes the notion of a form of sensibility and it can plausibly be maintained that Kant's argument in the *Critique of Pure Reason* has as its initial presupposition 'given our form of sensibility'. This form of sensibility is a 'given' in the sense that it is something that has to be accepted, in that while the possibility of other forms of sensibility is conceivable we have no idea what these would be like nor what it would be like to have them. In a similar way forms of life are 'given' in that while there could be other forms of life, we have no idea what they would be like. We have no such idea because what we can conceive is dependent upon the system of concepts that we have, and this is relative to our form of life.

Given this, there are clearly limits to the extent to which our concepts can change. The form of sensibility (or form of life) that we have determines those limits and thereby provides, as it were, a necessary underpinning for the agreement that exists over the application of concepts like that of red. It is clear enough in this connexion why it is that agreement over the colour of an object creates more than a presumption that the colour attributions in question are correct. The further that one gets away from concepts so intimately connected with our form of life, the less strong is that presumption of course, and, as I noted earlier, with scientific and technical concepts there can be little presumption at all that general agreement says anything for the truth of what is said. Yet without the possibility of agreement at some point there could be no claim for objectivity. The concepts in question must have some connexion with concepts where the criteria for their applicability do rest upon general agreement. Thus one can say with some plausibility that intersubjective agreement is the criterion of the concept of truth in that it provides the point of application for the concept of truth; it provides the condition under which it is intelligible to speak of truth at all. For without it there could not properly be said to be that common understanding of concepts which is necessary if anything that could be true is to be said. Indeed, given that interpersonal agreement is the background against which we can speak of truth, it is to be expected that if people agree on a matter what

## Objectivity

they say will *normally* be true. If it is not so, it is this fact which requires explanation, and where the falsity is persistent and radical there are grounds for seeking the explanation in some defect of the understanding.

Thus, intersubjective agreement acts as a kind of linking-point between truth and understanding. For understanding what we mean presupposes agreement on the application of our terms at certain points,<sup>10</sup> and agreement equally constitutes the criterion of the concept of truth. Thus intersubjectivity provides the basis of objectivity, although it would be impossible to argue that intersubjectivity and objectivity are *literally the same*. Moreover, while it may be reasonably clear how this works with, for example, colour concepts, it becomes very much less clear in other cases. In fields like those of morals and aesthetics what is agreed upon can be taken as the basis upon which reasoning and argument can proceed, both about what is the truth in these fields and about how the relevant terms are to be understood. Yet even if here too there is an anchoring point in natural responses by way of feeling to things and people (thus a root in our form of life), the possibilities of argument thereafter seem open-ended. Any attempt to short-cut argument by appeal to 'data', the intrinsic deliverances of the moral or aesthetic consciousness, seems, like the analogous appeal in epistemology to sense-data, doomed to failure—and for the same reason, that such 'deliverances' are concept-dependent, and the applicability of a concept is always an arguable matter in principle if not in fact. Similarly, the attempts to found morals on a view of human nature, like the attempts to found perceptual knowledge on a view of the nature of the senses, are doomed to failure or circularity, since they are in effect attempts to specify the form of life relative to which our concepts are developed, both in terms of those concepts and in such a way as to enable us to derive criteria for the applicability of those concepts from our account. We cannot specify a form of sensibility, e.g. vision, except in terms of the kind of object which is *appropriate* to it; nor can we specify a form of life that is requisite to morals except in terms of the kind of thing that it is appropriate for people to do. It is not therefore surprising that so many appeals in ethics to theories of human nature have covertly presupposed a view of how human beings ought to behave.

These parallels between epistemology, ethics and aesthetics are not fanciful, since these philosophical disciplines can be construed, at any rate in part, as having as their concern what sort of thing should be accepted as true, good and beautiful.<sup>11</sup> The general principles which are evolved in science, morals and art are *principles* owing to the very fact that they are taken as applicable in particular

cases subject only (as Mill put it analogously in connexion with the concept of 'cause') to negative conditions. That is, they are taken to hold unless the reason for their not holding is explicable in terms of another principle. Since this latter possibility cannot be excluded, the possibility of argument about the applicability of principles is open-ended. But to speak of the applicability of principles is another way of speaking of the applicability of concepts or connexions between concepts, and this explains why in all these fields the possibility of argument both about truth and about understanding is open-ended. But this says nothing against the possibility of objectivity in these fields. For, as we have seen where there is that possibility of intersubjective agreement, which is in one way or another the basis of both acknowledged truth and understanding, there is the possibility of objectivity. If we cannot say simply that objectivity consists in what is agreed upon, the importance of agreement for objectivity is nevertheless clear, and with it, of course, the importance of rational procedures for arriving at agreement. If what we agreed upon was haphazard and arbitrary there would be no case for objectivity at all. But it is not and could not be.

## Notes

- 1 *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, 1953, I, sect. 242.
- 2 'Seeing things as they are', inaugural lecture at Birkbeck College.
- 3 J. J. C. Smart, *Philosophy and Scientific Realism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, ch. 4.
- 4 The sense of 'subjectivity' in question is 'curious' because part of my thesis is that, where there is subjectivity, objectivity must be at least possible. The position under consideration in effect rules this out.
- 5 In *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R. C. Marsh, Allen & Unwin, 1956, p. 195.
- 6 Cf. Locke's man who thought of scarlet in terms of the sound of a trumpet in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk III, ch. 4, sect. 11.
- 7 *Op. cit.*, I, sect. 580.
- 8 Cf. the very similar process that takes place through scientific theories in scientific explanation.
- 9 *Op. cit.*, p. 226.
- 10 Not of course at any or every point or with reference to judgments of any or every particular form. This seems to me what is wrong with many of Norman Malcolm's moves in this context; cf. his insistence in *Dreaming*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959, p. 9 that the judgment 'I am asleep' must be true in a multitude of cases if it is to make sense, and the similar insistence on 'a multitude of cases in which it is true that so-and-so happened' if people are to have the concept of the past in his *Knowledge and Certainty*, Prentice Hall, 1963, pp. 195-6. It is possible for there to be concepts of 'sleep' or 'the



## Objectivity

past', and for judgments based on them to make sense, without these *particular* forms of judgment being true.

- 11 I say 'at any rate in part', because ethics has a concern with *practice* too, and aesthetics a concern with the *production* of works of art. These practical considerations raise other complications which affect the question of the basis of objectivity in these fields; cf., e.g., B. A. O. Williams, 'Consistency and realism', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, supp. vol., 1966.

# The Correspondence Theory of Truth

D. W. Hamlyn

THE Correspondence Theory of Truth is rather out of fashion at the moment. It is often referred to as obviously false—something that need be mentioned only to be dismissed. That is not to say that it has been replaced by one of its traditional rivals—the Coherence Theory, for example. On the contrary. It is sometimes said that a consideration of the way in which we employ the word 'true' in ordinary language indicates that its use is as a term of logical appraisal, i.e. the word 'true' is not descriptive but appraisive in a sense to be called 'logical'; for this reason the notion of truth cannot be defined in terms of properties like correspondence with fact. Moreover, to say that a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts is to confuse what it is to say that a statement is true with the grounds for appraising it as such.<sup>1</sup> The problem of truth is one concerning the *meaning* of 'truth'. To say that true statements correspond to the facts cannot constitute an elucidation of the meaning of 'truth'; at the most it can be an account of the grounds for saying that a statement is true. But it is often said also that the Correspondence Theory will not do even as an account of the grounds for appraising a statement as true. For, it is said, that theory presupposes that there is a simple relationship between language and the world; it presupposes that statements mirror or copy the world. Language is not really like that; hence the theory must be wrong.

The view which is attacked in this way is a caricature of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. It is a caricature, not a true account, because it is not a thesis of the *Tractatus* that the relationship between language and the world is in all cases simple. Wittgenstein described propositions as pictures, but not every picture is—even on his view—a simple or natural representation of its subject matter. Yet it might be inferred from the *Tractatus* that in atomic propositions the correspondence between them and the facts which they are supposed to picture must be more or less perspicuous. In an atomic proposition each word or name was said to correspond to an object; and since Wittgenstein thought that a fact was merely a concatenation of

## *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*

objects and a proposition merely a concatenation of names, all that would be required for the correspondence between them to be perspicuous would be that the concatenations should be seen to be of the same kind.

Wittgenstein's view, then, was that true atomic propositions correspond to reality because their elements match the elements of reality and because the elements of each are related in the same way: all true complex or molecular propositions are truth-functions of atomic propositions—their truth or falsity depends solely on the truth or falsity of their constituent propositions and on nothing else. If this is the Correspondence Theory of Truth, it is a very specialized theory, and the Correspondence Theory has not generally been thought by its proponents to be specialized, but something more or less obvious. It has indeed a considerable ancestry, being often associated with the name of Aristotle. If one examines Aristotle's writings one will find little of the doctrine of the *Tractatus*. Indeed, Aristotle's remarks on truth are extremely general.

At *Metaphysics* 1011b26 he says, 'To say that what is, is not or that what is not, is, is false, while to say that what is, is or that what is not, is not, is true.' There is nothing about correspondence here, and little perhaps that is illuminating either. The same may be said of his remark at *Metaphysics* 1012a4, where he says, 'Whenever anyone in assertion or denial joins two things together in one way he tells the truth, when in another he tells a falsehood.' Here, however, Aristotle assumes a disputable theory of judgment, to the effect that it consists of the combination of things or concepts. There are two other passages where more is to be found. The first, *Metaphysics* 1051b6, says, 'It is not by reason of our thinking so truly that you are white, if you are white, but it is by reason of your being white that we who make the assertion speak truly.' This at least makes clear that the truth of a proposition is dependent on the facts, although Aristotle uses no general word like 'fact'. The last passage which I shall mention is more explicit. It occurs at the end of *Categories* 12, and reads:

If a man exists, the proposition by which we say that he exists is true; and conversely—for if the proposition by which we say that a man exists is true, the man exists. But the true proposition is by no means the cause of the fact existing; the fact is in some way the cause of the proposition being true. For it is by virtue of the fact existing or not that the proposition is said to be true or false.

The word which is translated 'fact' here is the word *παῖμα*. It is, of course, etymologically connected with the word 'fact', both words

being originally connected with the notion of something done, but I am not sure that it is the correct translation. 'State of affairs' or 'situation' might be preferable, although the point is valid of 'fact'.

Perhaps this last passage is too explicit, in that it says that the relation between facts and true propositions is a causal one; but, in the light of Aristotle's views concerning the different senses of the word 'cause', too much should not be built upon this point. I shall return to it later. It is noteworthy, however, that nothing is said about correspondence in the passage. We are told only that propositions are true *by reason of* the facts—a view which many would no doubt consider completely innocuous. The crucial point is that Aristotle has no epistemological interests at stake in this passage; he does not ask how we can *know* whether a proposition is true, and in consequence he does not expect his account of truth to provide an answer to this question. Other philosophers have not followed him in this. In order that they may provide a means of telling whether a proposition is true they have tried to specify just *how* true propositions correspond to the facts. For this reason the Correspondence Theory has been sharpened and the notion of correspondence made precise.

One of the features of the programme which has become known as the search for certainty is that it has been thought necessary that some proposition or propositions should be capable of being *seen* to be true. The presuppositions of the programme—as seen *par excellence* in the Cartesian method of doubt—are that I cannot rightly be said to know something unless that which I claim to know is in some sense indubitable. Hence the concept of knowledge is thought to imply indubitability. The body of knowledge which we possess must rest upon a firm foundation of truths which are indubitable. The standard of indubitability generally invoked by epistemologists in this connexion has been such that if a truth is indubitable it is logically impossible that anything should count against it; it must be in some sense necessarily true while providing information about the world. How can a proposition be seen to be of this kind unless there is some way in which its truth can be read off it? If there is some direct relationship between the proposition and the world, then this will provide one means by which its truth can be seen. But does this direct relationship exist? A whole succession of philosophers have attempted to show that it does, or have assumed that it does. The examples which I shall consider indicate the direction which is inevitably taken by any sharpening of the Correspondence Theory of Truth in the interests of explaining how we can tell for certain that some propositions are true.

Locke (*Essay*, IV, 5) says, 'Truth seems to me, in the proper

clauses', and this may perhaps suggest that somehow facts are not independent of the propositions which state them. When we talk of the fact that Desdemona loves Cassio, the words following the 'that' are words which could be used in their own right to make a statement.

Even if one accepted Russell's account of facts as complexes of objects in a certain relation, it is extremely difficult to see what could be meant by the order of the terms in the belief. In the proposition 'Desdemona loves Cassio', the terms are related to each other in a certain serial order, and the conventions of English are such that this order does something to determine the sense of the proposition. That is to say that in English the use of 'loves' is such that the term which comes before it is the subject and usually refers to the lover. But the complete sense of the proposition is determined not merely by the order of the terms but by this together with the rules of syntax and the individual meanings of the terms. In any case, the terms 'Desdemona', 'loves', and 'Cassio' are not related in the same way as Desdemona, love and Cassio themselves were. It might be objected, and in a sense rightly, that I have here failed to take into account Russell's view of belief, according to which the mind in belief relates the actual objects which are the constituents of the fact; in which case the order would be merely the order of the relation, e.g. whether  $aRb$  or  $bRa$ . Nevertheless, there are other difficulties which Russell himself saw<sup>2</sup>—that the belief that Desdemona loves Cassio is expressed by means of a verb 'loves', not the name of a relation, i.e. 'loving'. Hence we cannot think of the belief as a complex of objects one of which is a relation.

The view that propositions or beliefs on the one hand and facts on the other are both kinds of complex objects, and that truth consists in the correspondence of the one to the other, is therefore clearly unsatisfactory. The analogous theory to be found in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is an attempt to treat them both as facts. On Wittgenstein's view, when he wrote the *Tractatus*, a proposition is as much a fact as the fact to which it corresponds if true. He thought that a proposition of the form ' $aRb$ ' should be read as 'The fact that the sign " $a$ " stands in a certain relation to the sign " $b$ "' (*Tractatus* 3. 1432), namely in being separated by the sign ' $R$ '. This says that  $aRb$ . But the question how it does say this presents grave but familiar difficulties.

If, to take the most plausible example, one takes ' $aRb$ ' to assert that  $a$  is to be left of  $b$ , the fact which constitutes the proposition consists of three terms or signs, ' $a$ ', ' $R$ ' and ' $b$ ', related by certain spatial or temporal relations. The fact to which this proposition corresponds consists of two terms related in a certain way, i.e. so that

compared with objects, and it is also possible to compare what is the case with regard to one set of objects with what is the case with regard to another set of objects. This is the foundation of Russell's and Wittgenstein's theories respectively. It is not necessary to go further into the difficulties involved in these theories, for the whole programme is dictated by the consideration that the correspondence to fact of certain propositions should be perspicuous. That is to say that this version of the Correspondence Theory is devoted to the attempt to show that the truth of certain propositions can be known for certain in an absolute sense. If this attempt is abandoned as unnecessary, there is no further need to accept this version of the Correspondence Theory. While the Coherence Theory is irrevocably tied to the task of showing how truth can be known for certain, and to what extent, there is no reason why the Correspondence Theory should be so tied. The statement 'A proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts' is not an answer to the question 'How do we *know* when a proposition is true?'

What function, then, does the Correspondence Theory serve? Strawson has said<sup>4</sup> that it is an attempt to answer the question 'When do we use the word "true"? (i.e. 'When is a proposition true?')—the answer given being, 'When it corresponds to the facts'. But he has also said that it is an abortive attempt to answer this question. It is impossible, he says, to elucidate the nature of fact-stating discourse—what it is to state facts—without circularity. Facts are merely what true statements state, and true statements state facts. A similar point emerges from a consideration of the attempt to equate facts with states of affairs. It is clearly insufficient to say that a proposition is true if it corresponds to a state of affairs. It is surely necessary to say *which* state of affairs, and the only possible answer which is sufficiently general appears to be that a proposition is true if it corresponds to the state of affairs which *actually* holds. It may be questioned whether an elucidation of the notion of truth which employs words like 'actually' or 'really' is much of an elucidation. Surely terms like 'actual' and 'real' are too close to the term 'true' to afford an elucidation. They belong to the same family. There would be little objection to saying that a fact is a state of affairs which actually holds or obtains, but it could not be held to be a satisfactory elucidation of the notion of a fact.

Strawson maintains in the same paper that the correct question for the philosophy of truth is 'How do we use the word "true"?', not 'When do we use it?' His own answer to this question is that we use it primarily to confirm other assertions or suppositions. Others (e.g. White) have said that we use it to appraise assertions. And with this the Correspondence Theory has been rejected, for it is not an answer

to this question at all. If facts are merely what true statements state, it is manifestly circular to define truth in terms of fact, since fact can be defined only in terms of truth.

The same circularity, however, applies to the answers given to the question 'How do we use the word "true"?' If the answer is 'To confirm other assertions' we might ask 'Confirm as what?'; and if the answer is 'To appraise other assertions' we might ask 'Appraise as what?' In each case the only possible answer to our question seems to be 'As true'; for when we use the word 'true' of other assertions we are *not confirming or appraising* them as, say, well-intended. Hence to say that we use the word 'true' in order to confirm or appraise other assertions is certainly not a sufficient account of its use. We need also to know what kind of *confirmation or appraisal* it is. Analogies can be drawn between the use of the word 'true' and the use of the word 'right' in morals. There is indeed a use of the word 'right' outside morals which is equivalent to that of 'true', e.g. 'What he says is right'. This analogy underlies the attempt to give an account of the use of the word 'true' in terms of appraisals. But to emphasize the analogy is not enough. There is an undoubted problem concerning the nature of moral appraisals—what makes them *moral and not, for example, aesthetic*. There is a similar problem about logical appraisals. If to call a proposition true is to appraise it, what kind of appraisal is this? I do not believe that an answer can be given to this question without circularity.<sup>5</sup>

If this is so, there is an inherent circularity in attempts to elucidate the notion of truth. If the *Correspondence Theory* is an attempt to provide such an elucidation it is clearly unsatisfactory. Yet the theory may still fulfil some genuine function, and the rest of this paper will be concerned to bring out this function and certain consequences of it. I shall first summarize results so far. Because philosophers have often been interested in the search for certainty, the *Correspondence Theory of Truth* has often been fitted to the task of providing a means of finding out for certain whether a proposition is true—a test of truth. In this it is parallel to the *Coherence Theory* which can have no other end; for it could not rightly be supposed that coherence with other propositions is what we *mean* by truth. This view can be rejected if it is granted that such certainty is not a requisite of knowledge. The *Correspondence Theory* has also been considered as an elucidation of the notion of truth, either as a theory about the meaning of the word 'true' or as an account of the conditions under which we apply the word 'true'. But in this sense the theory is circular.

At the beginning of this paper I said that it has been held that whereas correspondence with fact cannot be regarded as what

'truth' means, it could be regarded as the ground for judging a statement to be true. If this is so, it is a ground of a very peculiar sort. Different statements may be regarded as true for very different reasons; that is to say that their verification may be very different. The grounds for the assertion that a scientific statement is true may be provided by listing the evidence; while those for the assertion that Pythagoras' Theorem is true may be provided by giving the proof. There may be different grounds again for legal, moral, aesthetic truths, etc. In the ordinary sense of the word 'ground' it would not be right to say that correspondence with fact is a ground for declaring a statement to be true. If correspondence with fact is not part of the meaning of truth, it does at least seem to be the constituent condition of truth.

To put the matter in another way. If, with respect to any particular proposition, e.g. 'The cat is on the mat', it is asked what are the conditions, sufficient or necessary, of its being judged true, it is possible to reply as follows: If Smith says that the cat is on the mat, and if Smith is always a reliable person, *one* sufficient condition of what he says being judged true is that he says it. He is so reliable, we might say, that his saying it is enough to make it true. Another condition which would be sufficient might be that we have seen it with our own eyes. There are many other possibilities, but the only *general* sufficient condition, i.e. one which is common to all circumstances, is that the cat is in fact on the mat. Again, if Smith says that the cat is on the mat, *one* necessary condition of what he says being judged true is that he means by the word 'cat' an animal of the sort which is in fact on the mat. He must mean this by the word 'cat' if the proposition is to be judged true. Another necessary condition would be that there is a cat at all. There are again many other possibilities, but the only *general* necessary condition of the statement being judged true is that the cat is in fact on the mat. Hence the fact that the cat is on the mat is the only general sufficient and necessary condition of the assertion being judged true. If one wished to generalize this and say what are the necessary and sufficient conditions of *any* assertion being judged true, it is difficult to know what else *one* could say other than that the assertion must correspond to the facts. But nothing turns on the use of the word 'corresponds' here. All that is meant is that wherever there is a true statement there is a fact stated by it, and wherever a fact a possible true statement which states it.

Even if to talk of correspondence with fact is to give the necessary and sufficient conditions of *any* assertion being judged true, it must be made clear what is conveyed by this. It is possible to conceive of language as something which, *qua* social institution, has functions.



## *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*

One of its functions is of course to convey meaning or sense. But since language is not something indulged in merely for its own sake, since it is in some sense an instrument which we use in dealing with the world, another of its functions is what may be called objectivity. In their use, a typical function of nouns is to refer to things, of adjectives to describe things, and of indicative sentences to state facts. In so far as these functions are fulfilled successfully, so objectivity is attained. Language would not be what it is if these functions were *never* successfully fulfilled. It is not a contingent or accidental matter that statements can be made which succeed in stating facts, any more than it is an accidental matter that there are expressions which may be used to refer uniquely to things. That some statements succeed in stating facts is part of the constituent conditions of language. I am not here saying that *we* or *people in general* want as a rule to make true statements. We may have various purposes in saying what we say, and if we are reprobate characters we may like to deceive people constantly. But our success in doing so turns on the fact that the normal function of statements is to state facts. For this reason it would indeed be very odd if people did not *as a rule* want to make true statements. There is a presumption that people want to tell the truth and it is to this presumption that language is fitted. But it is only a presumption, and to say that one function of language is to state facts is not in itself to say anything about people's wants.

If it is possible to look at the stating of facts as one of the functions of our use of language, it may be inferred that to call a statement true is to say that it has performed this function well or properly. It is, moreover, *this* function which it has performed properly and not another. Stating facts is quite different from naming things, for example, and the two must not be confused. The view that facts may be regarded as complexes of objects arises from just this confusion. For if a fact is a complex of objects it would seem that facts can be named in the same way as any other complex of objects. In a sense, of course, we *can* name facts—by using the expression 'the fact that . . .'—but not by using statements. In the latter case we do not name facts; we state them.

How could one make such a distinction clear to someone who claimed not to understand? It is of no use here to consider our use of the words 'fact' and 'thing' or 'object' in ordinary language. Useful as that procedure may be in some philosophical contexts, it is of no use here. In ordinary language we undoubtedly use the word 'fact' in a great number of ways. Fact may be opposed to fiction, to theory, to supposition, to evaluation and so on. We speak of something being fact not fiction, fact not theory or supposition, and we say that some

assertions are factual not evaluative. Each of these contrasts indicates a different use of the word 'fact'. Etymologically, the word is connected with 'what is done', and its use in that sense survives in the phrases 'before the fact' and 'after the fact' in legal contexts. But the assertion that a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts is not an assertion drawn from ordinary language. It is nothing if not a philosopher's remark. Hence, the claim, sometimes heard, that the Correspondence Theory agrees with our ordinary remarks to the effect that something that has been said *fits or is in agreement* with the facts, is of doubtful relevance.<sup>6</sup> The assertion that a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts is a philosophical assertion of the highest generality. The use of the word 'fact' in this context is to draw attention to a certain *category*—the category of facts, as distinct from the category of things, qualities, events, etc.

The notion of such categories arises initially from consideration of the ways in which it is possible to deal with the world linguistically (or, for that matter, in thought). We find ourselves with certain ways of thinking about the world, and these are reflected in language in the existence of certain distinct uses of expressions; e.g. we name things, attribute properties and state facts. Anyone who can think and use language is in the position to know this implicitly at least. Hence, categories arise, so to speak, at the frontiers between language and the world. They cannot, therefore, be elucidated in the way in which we should elucidate other notions. We cannot, for example, subsume them under a genus, for, as Aristotle saw (although he did not see clearly why), categories represent ultimate genera. We can move from a category to the way of dealing with the world which goes with it, e.g. from the category of a thing to the notions of naming, identification or reference (for things are ultimately the objects of reference or identification).<sup>7</sup> But if this in turn is not understood, we can move only back to the category—what we in general refer to or identify in the world are things. There is an inevitable circularity here, due to the fact that we are in the most general sense at the frontiers between language or thought and the world. We can explain the category only by reference to the modes of thought by which we pick it out, and vice versa. A category is merely the concept of one type of entity which is so picked out. Facts are picked out by the making of true statements; hence it is that they are merely what true statements state, and that true statements state facts. If someone fails to understand the difference between facts and things, all that can be done is to ask him to reconsider his modes of thought; and the easiest way of doing this is to consider the uses of language.<sup>8</sup>

The statement 'A proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts' is both unilluminating and profound. It is unilluminating

because it is of no use if someone claims not to understand the concept of truth at all. (I say 'concept' not 'expression', because the failure to understand an expression may be only a question of translation, e.g. a Frenchman may not understand the word 'true', but he must have the concept of truth.) It is profound inasmuch as it states one of the most general truths it is possible to state. Hence the Correspondence Theory seems both undeniable and empty.

Yet not quite—for a premise of the argument which leads to that theory is that there is such a thing as objectivity. I have indeed been even more precise than that, for I have said that the notion of a category like that of a fact arises from a consideration of ways of thinking *about the world*. If this is so, a presupposition of the employment of the notion of a fact is that there is such a world. For this reason the employment of the notion presupposes realism in some sense of that word. It is no coincidence that the Correspondence Theory is to be first encountered in Aristotle, for he was a realist in more than one sense. He was a realist in the general sense that he believed in the existence of a concrete world independent of our minds, and he was a realist in the more restricted sense that he believed that to our thought there corresponded objects which were, in a real sense, things, e.g. species. Most Correspondence Theorists have been realists in the restricted sense as well as the general sense—as witness the constant confusion between facts and situations, states of affairs and complexes of objects. But to accept the Correspondence Theory it is not necessary to embrace realism in the restricted sense; the theory presupposes only the more general sense of realism. It might be questioned whether the theory requires even realism in the general sense, whether it does not necessitate objectivity only. Such a view is plausible to the extent that in many cases whether something is a fact depends only on whether there is an agreed method of decision about it (cf. the question of whether X is guilty in law). It is, however, doubtful whether the notion of objectivity in general would have arisen if there were not already the concept of an objective and independent world.

It is tempting to suppose that because there is a reciprocal connexion between the concepts of true statements and facts—because, that is, a statement is true if and only if there is a fact to which it corresponds and vice versa—facts are *created* along with the making of true statements. It does not, however, follow from this reciprocal connexion that there are not facts waiting to be discovered. It is necessary, not that a statement should have been made before there is a fact, but only that there should be the *possibility* of making such a statement. Even so, the concept of a fact would have no application for anyone who *per impossibile* did not know what it was to make a true

statement. To this extent the obtaining of facts in general is dependent not only on the nature of the world, but also on us. But if the world were not in some sense what it is, the possibility of stating facts would not have arisen either. Consider, for example, what would be possible in a Heraclitean world of constant flux. As Plato, and perhaps Cratylus, saw, in such a world it would be impossible to say anything.

Secondly, the fact that there is a reciprocal logical connexion between the concepts of a fact and a true statement (for it is between the *concepts* that such a logical connexion holds) does not entail that there is no other non-reciprocal connexion between the actual facts and true statements. In the passage of the *Categories* referred to earlier, Aristotle says that facts are the *causes* of the truth of statements. Since Aristotle's conception of cause is not ours purely and simply, it would be better to say that facts are the reason for the truth of the corresponding statements. This brings out the point that the truth of a statement is dependent upon the nature of the world. To refuse to admit this is to be seduced by the interdefinability of the concepts of fact and true statement. There is no rule to the effect that where two concepts are interdefinable the things which fall under those concepts cannot be such that one of them is dependent on the other.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, our employment of the concepts of truth and fact depends both upon the existence of an objective world and upon our being able to make statements. It would be wrong to deny that facts are independent of ourselves, but it would be equally wrong to assert that there is any other way in which the facts may be discovered except by seeing which statements are true. For by 'fact' is meant just that which corresponds to such a statement.

Anyone who asserts that a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts commits himself to a *form* of realism, or at least to a denial of idealism. But this form of realism is minimal in the sense that it is merely a *necessary* condition of a statement's correspondence to fact that there should be an independent world. As I have already said, objectivity is a wider notion than that of an independent world. There are certainly truths which are objective but which we might be reluctant to characterize as truths about the world. It is, for example, a truism that, other things being equal, we ought to keep our promises. There is no reason to deny that there is a fact to this effect, and no reason, therefore, to deny that there are moral facts. Some moral philosophers have denied that there are moral facts on the mistaken grounds that moral judgments are not descriptive statements. But such grounds are irrelevant; there may be reasons for refusing to call moral judgments true or false, but they

## *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*

cannot be these. Relevant grounds would be provided, for example, by the view that there are no *objective* moral judgments. But once it is admitted that there *are* objective moral judgments, there remains no sufficient reason for the denial of moral facts. The same considerations apply to any sphere where objectivity is possible. There is no reason, for example, to deny the existence of *negative* facts, although many philosophers have thought that there is. It is certainly an objective truth that there are no dodos any longer.

There is nevertheless reason for saying that unless there were a world independent of ourselves there could not be objectivity of any sort. For how could standards of correctness arise for a purely solipsistic consciousness? The considerations which are relevant here are those which Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* brings to bear on the question of intrinsically private languages. There could be no private language of this sort because there would be no rules for the application of its terms and such rules are presupposed by the use of language. The notion of a rule implies the possibility of a check upon its observance. In an intrinsically private language (as opposed to a language which, while derived from a public one, is used for private purposes) there could be no possibility of such a check and hence no way of distinguishing between a *decision* to employ an expression and a *recognition* that it is correct so to do (a recognition that we are correctly following a rule). What point would speaking of 'correctness' have in such a case? Standards of correctness in the use of terms imply the possibility of a check upon the use of these, and this implies the existence of other people and the existence of a common frame of reference. This is at least the beginnings of an independent world. For this reason, it is feasible to suggest that the paradigm cases of statements which state facts are those which are *about* such an independent world. Unless such statements were possible there would be no objective *moral* truths either, and hence no moral facts, even though moral statements are not *about* the world.

In the sense which I have explained, the Correspondence Theory of Truth seems to me disputable only by one who denies objectivity altogether (and for such a philosopher no theory of truth will do). Because of the ultimate generality of the theory, however, it is impossible to lay down the conditions under which a statement corresponds to the facts in any detail.<sup>10</sup> Since statements may be of a great number of different kinds, no general account can be given of the *ways* in which it is possible to state facts. Nor does the theory, as I have given it, presuppose any particular theory of meaning. In this respect it differs considerably from the version put forward by the Logical Atomists, according to which the single expressions

# The foundations of knowledge

16

A. Quinton

THE idea that knowledge forms an ordered, hierarchical system is not a new one, but it has been particularly prominent in British philosophy in the last fifty years. It was anticipated by the theory of self-evidence put forward by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* and assumed by Descartes in his pursuit of an indubitable starting-point for the reconstruction of his beliefs. But where Aristotle and Descartes took the ultimate truths on which the edifice of knowledge was reared to be *a priori* principles, the more recent adherents of this general position have understood them to be particular statements of empirical fact.

The inspiration behind the recurrences of this theory has in each case been mathematical and logical. Aristotle's version was in accord with his own discovery of deductive logic, and with the beginnings of Greek geometry in Pythagoras and perhaps Thales, eventually to be systematized by Euclid. Descartes was explicit about his debt to the pure mathematics of his own time, to which he extensively contributed, and was concerned also to found a systematic science of mechanics. In the case of Russell, the central figure of the contemporary revival of the doctrine, there is an equally close connexion between theory of knowledge on the one hand, and mathematics and logic on the other. The essential aim of *Principia Mathematica* (Russell and Whitehead) was to demonstrate the identity of logic and mathematics by showing that the whole of mathematics could be derived from an improved deductive logic. The unitary discipline they composed was set out by him in a Euclidean manner as a vast body of theorems derived with the aid of three intuitively acceptable rules of inference from five equally self-evident logical axioms. By organizing a particular body of knowledge in a fully logically articulate way *Principia Mathematica* provided a model for the systematic presentation of knowledge in general. The idea of a comparable systematic presentation of our knowledge of empirical fact, in which the justification of every kind of thing we empirically know or have reason to believe is made clear by displaying its logical derivation from its ultimate empirical

evidence, lies behind a long sequence of important and influential treatises: Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World: An inquiry into meaning and truth* and *Human Knowledge*, Schlick's *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Carnap's *Logische Aufbau der Welt*, C. I. Lewis's *Mind and the World Order* and *Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, Price's *Perception*, Reichenbach's *Experience and Prediction* and Ayer's *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*.

In each of these works it is said that knowledge has foundations and that the task of a philosophical theory of knowledge is to identify and describe these foundations and to reveal the logical dependence, whether deductive or inductive, of every other sort of justified belief upon them. As distinct from such earlier empiricists as Locke, Hume and Mill, the members of this tradition, which has been the standard or classical form of epistemology, in Britain at any rate, in this century, have been quite definite that their purpose is to give a logical analysis of knowledge as it actually exists and not a genetic or historical or psychological account of its growth. In Reichenbach's useful phrase, they are offering a rational reconstruction of our knowledge which sets out the reasons that logically justify our beliefs and not a narrative of the causes that in fact led us to adopt them.

in a very different sense. Bodies of assertions can be systematized in many alternative ways between which the analyst has a free choice. A statement is basic only in relation to a particular, freely chosen, way of systematizing the set to which it belongs. Finally, Austin has argued that the doctrine of foundations is altogether misconceived.

In what follows I shall first consider the arguments that have been advanced for the general thesis that knowledge has foundations. In particular I shall examine the infinite regress arguments that have been brought in support of the view that there must be some intuitive statements which have not been inferred from anything else and for the view that there must be some ostensive statements whose meaning is not introduced by correlating them with other statements whose meaning is already understood. Secondly, I shall consider the specification given by the standard theory of the detailed characteristics of these intuitive and ostensive statements as 1. certain or incorrigible, and 2. sensory or phenomenal. Thirdly, I shall look at the alternatives to these two specifications: the theories that basic statements may be probable or corrigible, on the one hand, and that they may report public, physical states of affairs, on the other. Finally, I shall turn to the more radical view that knowledge has no foundations of the kind the doctrine supposes, and thus that there are no absolutely or logically basic statements. A discussion of these topics will cover the main elements of epistemological controversy among analytic philosophers in the English-speaking world during the past fifty years.

The traditional form of the doctrine of foundations holds that there must be some intuitive beliefs if any beliefs are to be justified at all. By an intuitive belief is meant one which does not owe its truth or credibility to some other belief or beliefs from which it can be inferred. For a belief to be justified it is not enough for it to be accepted, let alone merely entertained. There must also be good reason for accepting it. Certainly some beliefs are justifiable by reference to others, but only if these other beliefs are themselves established or well confirmed. If every belief was dependent on others for its justification, no belief would be justified at all, for in this case to justify any belief would require the justification of an infinite series of beliefs. So if any belief is to be justified, there must be a class of basic, non-inferential beliefs to bring the regress of justification to a halt. These terminal, intuitive beliefs need not be strictly self-evident in the sense that the belief is its own justification. All that is required is that what justifies them should not be another belief.



ive as well. But they do not have to be. From the fact that statable reasons are not *required* it does not follow that they are not *available*. Equally psychologically intuitive beliefs need not be logically intuitive. First we find ourselves inclined to accept a belief, then we look round for reasons in support of it. Finally, no common-or-garden intuition can be logically intuitive though all will be psychologically intuitive.

There do not have to be common-or-garden intuitions but there are, and it is a good thing that there are for otherwise the accumulation of knowledge would be a very plodding, laborious and uneconomical business. There must be psychologically intuitive beliefs if there are logically intuitive beliefs, and also, it would seem if the number of beliefs held by a person at any given moment is finite. At any rate, if there was a time before which he had no beliefs at all, this must be so since he could have had no reason for his first belief or beliefs. These first beliefs may cease to be intuitive in this sense if he acquires reasons for them, but then some of these reasons will have to be intuitive since they cannot be based on the beliefs that they are used to support.

The traditional form of the doctrine of foundations is clearly concerned with logically intuitive beliefs. What it maintains is that there must be a set of statements which do not require for their justification the establishment of any other beliefs.

This familiar line of argument has been supplemented and fortified in recent times by an analogous train of reasoning which derives the necessity of foundations for knowledge, not from the conditions which must be satisfied if any belief is to be justified, but from the conditions which must be satisfied if any statement is to be understood. It seeks to show that there must be ostensive statements, in other words, statements whose meaning is not explained in terms of other statements already understood. Its starting-point is the fact that we often explain the meaning of a form of words by asserting it to be the same as that of some other statement or statements, and it argues that to avoid an infinite regress of explanation there must be a class of statements whose meaning is explained in some other way, not by correlation with other statements but by correlation with the world outside language. The parallels between this theory of ostensive statements and the theory of intuitive statements are obvious. Both rest on infinite regress arguments; in one case applied to the idea that all statements are explained by definition in terms of others, in the other applied to the idea that all statements are justified by inference from others.

The classic presentation of what might be called the pure theory

of ostensive statements is to be found in the account of elementary propositions in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. He contends that if any statement is to have a definite sense it must be, or be equivalent and so reducible to, a statement or set of statements which correspond directly to the facts of which the world is composed. The underlying principle of this theory is less original than the way in which it is expressed. For what it really does is to present in a new way a generalized version of the principle of traditional empiricism that all ideas or concepts are directly derived from and correlated with experience. But in Wittgenstein there is no commitment to the empirical nature of terms of the analysis. The novelty of Wittgenstein's version of the theory is that it takes the ultimate units or elements of meaning to be not words but sentences. Underlying this assumption is a theory of the logical priority of sentences to words, first propounded by Frege in his precept of philosophical method: 'Never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition.' In closely similar words Wittgenstein remarks: 'Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning.' This fact is concealed by the occurrence of intelligible one-word utterances, such as 'fire' or 'stop'. But to make anything of such one-word utterances we have to take them as sentences by supplying the missing elements, for example, 'there is a fire here', 'this place is on fire', 'fire that gun', 'light the fire', etc. To understand the meaning of a word is necessarily to understand the kinds of sentence in which it can occur. As our mastery of language increases we realize that many groups of words play similar syntactical parts, and this makes the definition of single words in terms of other words possible. When told that 'spinster' means the same as 'unmarried woman' I understand that the defined word can occur in all the sentences in which I already understand the defining phrase to be capable of occurring significantly.

The arguments for intuitive and ostensive statements are connected as well as similar in form. The ostensive statement is given its meaning by correlation with some kind of observable situation. It has a meaning to the extent that observable situations are divided into those of which it is true and those of which it is not. To know what it means or to understand it is to be able to pick out the situations in which it is true, or at least to have been trained to respond to such situations with an inclination to utter it. Now the occurrence of a situation of the appropriate, verifying kind will be the sufficient reason for the assertion of an intuitive statement, the non-inferential kind of justification required to bring an end to the infinite regress.

Intuitive statements must be ostensively learnt, for if they were explained in terms of other statements these latter could serve as premises for an inference to them; and ostensive statements must be intuitive, for the occurrence of a situation of the kind by correlation with which they were explained would be a sufficient reason of a non-inferential kind for their acceptance. As will emerge more fully later, it would be going too far to say that all ostensive statements are intuitive in the sense that the sufficient reason for their acceptance must always be non-inferential. For if we have found that when and only when an ostensive statement  $o$  is true, another statement  $p$  is true, we can reasonably infer from a new case of the truth of  $p$  that  $o$  is true even though we are unaware of the non-inferential sufficient reason for asserting it in this case.

From now on I shall refer to statements that are both ostensive and intuitive as basic. Basic statements are the axioms of the system of factual or empirical knowledge. Non-basic or derived statements are explained in terms of them and are established or confirmed by inference from them. Derived statements can be divided into two classes at this stage. First, there are those which are equivalent to some closed or finite set of basic statements, the conjunctions, disjunctions and conditionals called molecular propositions by Russell and Wittgenstein. Secondly, there are general propositions, equivalent to an open set of basic statements. The former can be established conclusively by deductive inference from the closed set of basic statements that makes up the ultimate evidence for them. But the latter can be confirmed only inductively by establishing some finite subset of the open set of basic statements that follow from them. It is worth noticing that this way of classifying the main elements of discourse does something to support the traditional view of induction, to be found in the writings of Mill, as primarily a matter of confirming general statements by establishing their singular, basic, consequences and thus as the inverse of deduction. A less restricted idea of induction is now widely accepted which defines any inference as inductive in which the conclusion is supported but not entailed by the premises (cf. for example, Strawson). But unless the relevance of the premises of a non-deductive inference to its conclusion is established by the fact that they follow from it, and thus are part of its logical content, this relevance can be established only by reference to a general statement which has been confirmed in the primary, traditional way.

Basic statements, defined as intuitive and ostensive, have been given a variety of names in recent works on the theory of knowledge. They are the atomic propositions of Russell's logical atomism, the elementary propositions of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, the protocol

propositions of the Vienna Circle. Schlick called them constataions, Lewis expressive judgments. But however they have been described they have been taken to be the ultimate statable evidence of all the factual assertions we have any good reason to assert, and to constitute the ultimate analysis of everything we can significantly assert. They are held to be the indispensable support of whatever we know or have reason to believe and to be entailed by everything significant that we say.

So far I have treated them in a purely formal and generalized way. But most theorists of basic statements, with the exception of Wittgenstein, have gone farther. In the first place they have maintained that all basic statements are certain, usually stating or implying the corollary that no derived statement can be more than probable. Secondly, they have identified them with phenomenal reports of immediate experience, expressed in the first person singular and in the present tense. But both of these consequential theories have been firmly rejected by some of those who accept the general principle that there must be some basic statements if any statement is to be understood or rationally accepted. Russell has always been doubtful of the certainty or incorrigibility of any contingent statement whatever, and has been content to claim that phenomenal basic statements are less uncertain and corrigible than anything else, a position endorsed by A. J. Ayer in his first book,<sup>1</sup> but later abandoned by him. H. H. Price, in his lecture *Truth and Corrigibility*<sup>2</sup> and Ayer, in his essay 'Basic propositions',<sup>3</sup> have both considered the possibility of basic statements that are no more than probable; but their consideration has been only in a conjectural, exploratory spirit. As to the phenomenal or experiential interpretation of the concrete character of basic statements, this was ruled out by the theory of physicalism which occurred as a kind of left-wing deviation within logical positivism; and, with a certain licence, a theory similar to physicalism can be attributed to G. Ryle, whose *Concept of Mind*<sup>4</sup> does seem to imply a general theory of knowledge of the kind that sees knowledge as a structure with foundations.

It has been widely assumed that basic statements must be certain and incorrigible. The most general argument for this assertion is not often stated, but it is similar in character to the arguments used to establish that intuitive and ostensive statements are indispensable if any beliefs are to be justified or understood. It is clearly presented by C. I. Lewis in his *Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*<sup>5</sup> where he writes: 'If anything is to be probable, then something must be certain. The data which support a genuine probability must themselves be certainties.' One merely probable statement may be

supported by another, but 'such confirmation is only provisional and hypothetical, and it must have reference eventually to confirmation by direct experience, which alone is capable of being decisive and providing any sure foundation'.<sup>6</sup> What lies behind this conviction is the view that probability is essentially relative in character, that no statement is probable by itself but only in relation to its evidence, the presumed truth of some other statement. Clearly, if this were correct it would follow that not all statements could be no more than probable. The chain of probabilifying evidence could never be completed. Price, in *Truth and Corrigibility*, has drawn a useful distinction between hypothetical and categorical probability. A statement of hypothetical probability is non-committal with regard to the acceptability of its evidence. 'If he has caught the train he will probably be there by six', leaves the question of his having caught the train open and says only that he will probably arrive by six *if* he has caught it. A statement of categorical probability, set out in full, is of the form 'since he has caught the train he will probably be there by six', and any such statement as 'he will probably be there by six' presupposes the acceptance of some such since-clause.

What makes Lewis's argument suspect is that certainty would appear to be just as much relative to evidence as probability. For just the same reasons exist for denying that certainty is an intrinsic property of statements as for denying that probability is. Both properties of statements vary with time. What was not, in the light of the evidence available a month ago, either probable or certain may be probable or certain now. So the more or less Cartesian identification of the certain with the necessarily true is a mistake. A statement is necessarily true, if it is, whether anybody has any good reason for thinking so or not. It has always been necessarily true that there is no largest prime number, but before Euclid discovered his proof of the fact it was not certain that this was so.

We are faced here by another version of the difficulty we discovered in accepting as a general account of the conditions under which it was correct to say 'X knows that  $p$ ' the requirements that X believes that  $p$ ,  $p$  is true and X has sufficient reason for believing  $p$ . And the difficulty can be circumvented by the same manoeuvre of distinguishing between the type of evidence or sufficient reason that can be expressed as a statement and the type that cannot. We can allow that both certainty and probability are relative to evidence provided that we admit that the evidence may be propositional, in other words, a belief, certain or probable, from which the initial statement can be inferred with certainty or probability, or experiential,

the occurrence of an experience or awareness of the existence of some observable situation. The infinite regress argument rules out the idea that there must be propositional evidence for every certain or probable statement but, if evidence is allowed to be experiential as well, the argument cannot be brought to bear against the view that all statements that we have any reason to believe must rest on evidence.

In *Truth and Corrigibility* Price opposes to the view that probability presupposes certainty a conception of the intrinsic probability of statements. He suggests that it is possessed by statements of perception, introspection and memory. Such statements, he continues, will be as corrigible as any other empirical assertions, but they will differ from these others in being also, as he puts it, 'corrigent', that is to say, 'capable of correcting other judgements, as well as receiving correction from them'. But he confesses to some doubts about the concept of intrinsic probability, wondering if it is not as nonsensical an idea as that of being intrinsically longer. Recognition that if probability is relative so is certainty, together with the distinction between propositional and experiential evidence, should go some way towards removing these doubts. Instead of 'intrinsic' we can speak of 'experiential' probability, contrasting it with the propositional probability of a statement relative to the storable evidence for it. But these doubts cannot be wholly set at rest until a positive account is forthcoming of the manner in which experience confers intrinsic probability on statements.

Another general argument for the view that probability presupposes certainty, outlined in an essay of S. N. Hampshire's on 'Self-knowledge and will',<sup>7</sup> will help to show what sort of thing this positive account of experiential probability must be. Hampshire says that to understand a statement is to be aware of the conditions in which it can be known to be true. There is, he says, 'a necessary connection between learning the meaning of an expression and learning what are the standard conditions of its use'. So for every statement whose meaning is understood there must be some conditions in which it can be known for certain to be true, namely, conditions of the sort that are standard for introducing someone to the meaning of the statement in question. Hampshire's point is a seemingly inevitable development of the idea that the meaning of a statement is given by its truth-conditions. One weakness of the argument, as Hampshire puts it, is that it can apply only to ostensive statements. The statement that this stone is infinitely divisible has an intelligible meaning (perhaps several), but, except on an interpretation that renders it analytic, it is hard to see that we can envisage circumstances in which we should conclude that it was certainly

true. But is it even correct to say that ostensive statements must be incorrigible?

In his first discussion of the subject in *Language, Truth and Logic*, Ayer held that there were no incorrigible empirical statements on the ground that a sentence could refer exclusively to the current experience of the speaker only if it consisted entirely of demonstrative expressions. But if so, it would not be a genuine statement, which must contain, as well as a demonstrative to indicate what it refers to, a general predicative term, whose application to the object of reference involves a comparison of that object with other objects satisfying the same predicate and serving as the standard for its application. In his later essay, 'Basic propositions', however, he says that, in applying purely sensory predicates to our current immediate experience, we describe it, not by relating it to anything else, 'but by indicating that a certain word applies to it in virtue of a meaning rule of the language', meaning rules of this ostensive kind are necessary for any language that can be used for purposes of empirical description.

Unless one knows how to employ [these rules], one does not understand the language. Thus, I understand the use of a word if I know in what situations to apply it. For this it is essential that I should be able to recognize the situations when I come upon them; but in order to effect this recognition it is not necessary that I should consciously compare these situations with memories of their predecessors.

But, he continues, although a language must have ostensive meaning rules, these do not have to be of the kind which conclusively establish the truth or falsehood of the statements they are used to introduce. Meaning rules can be of this certifying kind, and Ayer believes that the rules governing the use of such statements as 'this looks green' and 'I am in pain' actually are. But they do not have to be, they could be merely probabilifying, so to speak.

It might be that the rules were such that every correct description of an empirical situation involved some reference beyond it; and in that case, while the use of the sentence which was dictated by the given meaning rule would be justified in the given situation, its truth would not be conclusively established.

In other words, ostensive rules determine the conditions in which it is correct to make a statement or in which one is justified in doing so, but to do this is not necessarily to lay down the conditions in which

the statement is conclusively established and thus known for certain to be true. Ayer's distinction between the correct use as that in which the making of a statement is justified and as that in which it is conclusively established as certainly true, and so, as it were, absolutely justified, removes the obstacle to Price's hypothesis of intrinsically probable statements presented by Hampshire's argument. To understand the meaning of an ostensive statement is to know in what circumstances it is correct to make it and these need not, *a priori*, be those in which it is certainly true.

While it has been widely, though not universally, assumed that basic statements are incorrigible, it has not usually been deduced that this is so in Lewis's way from the concept of a basic statement. A common procedure has been to say that the basic statements of our language are, in fact, phenomenal or sensory statements about our immediate, current experience, whether perceptual or introspective, and that these phenomenal statements are, as it happens, incorrigible. On the other hand, however, the identification of phenomenal statements as basic is not ordinarily presented simply as a matter of straightforwardly discoverable fact about our use of language. It is supported by the principle that the ultimate source of our knowledge about matters of fact is experience, observation or perception. At the level of common sense it might seem that a statement reporting what we experience, observe or perceive would refer to medium-sized material things currently in our fairly close environment. But the usual view of observation statements is that they report the current sense-impressions of the speaker. And the main reason for this is that statements about material things are susceptible to doubt and correction, that, by carrying implications about what may be observed at other times, or with other senses, or by other people, they go beyond what we directly apprehend or are aware of and so embody an element of inference. Thus Price says 'When I see a tomato there is much that I can doubt. . . . One thing, however, I cannot doubt: that there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape [which] is directly present to my consciousness.'<sup>8</sup> This patch of colour, private to my consciousness, is what is given in perception, it is the type of empirical datum from which all the rest of my factual beliefs are inferred. Ayer takes basic statements to be those which we discover by direct awareness and he defines 'direct awareness' as entailing that 'if someone is directly aware of an object *x*, it follows that *x* exists and that it really has whatever properties it is appearing to have' and again 'that whenever we are directly aware of a sense-datum, it follows that we know some proposition which describes the sense-datum to be true'.<sup>9</sup>



The upshot of these accounts of the matter is that in every perceptual situation, in every situation in which we perceive or think we perceive something, it is at least certain that we seem to perceive something and this is held to be equivalent to the statement that we know for certain that a seeming object, or sense-impression, in other words, exists.

The standard view, then, is that the basic statements which are the foundations of our knowledge of matters of fact are phenomenal reports of our immediate experience. These are incorrigible in the sense that since they do not go beyond what we are directly aware of and have nothing predictive about them, they cannot be falsified by any subsequent experience. Statements about material things, on the other hand, are subsequently corrigible. The implications they carry may turn out to be false. But the only ways in which statements about impressions can be false are by the deliberate intent of the person who has the impression being reported (for since they are contingent there is no contradiction in denying them), and by merely verbal error. Statements about material things are or seem intuitive in the psychological sense. We do not ordinarily, if ever, infer them consciously from statements about impressions. But, it is argued, since they are corrigible conjectures about what is going on outside the field of our direct awareness they cannot be logically intuitive, but must be implicitly inferred from statements about impressions if their assertion is to be justified.

Initially, two main lines of objection were developed to this theory of the phenomenal character of basic statements. The first of these started from the difficulty of giving an acceptable account of the way in which beliefs about material things were supported and justified by reports of immediate experience. Statements about objects could only be confirmed by statements about impressions that followed logically from them, and they could only have a definite meaning if they were capable in principle of translation into ostensive impression statements. But the only acceptable-looking translations failed to eliminate the reference to material things from the translation. 'There is a table in the next room' does not entail 'if I were having the impression of being in the next room, I should be having the impression of a table', but only 'if I actually were in the next room, I should be having the impression of a table'. Another difficulty arose from widely felt insufficiency of any set of hypothetical statements, however extensive, to add up to a categorical statement about material things.

More important than this negative objection, which led to no clear alternative account of the problem and no serious scrutiny of its underlying assumptions, was the criticism of Carnap and

Neurath which was directed against the private and uncommunicable character of the facts reported by phenomenal statements. They argued that science, and therefore ordinary common knowledge, was a public, intersubjective affair and could not be based on private experiences that individuals had no way of communicating to one another. Neurath further objected to the momentary and unfalsifiable nature of phenomenal basic statements like Schlick's constataions. As momentary they could be used only to confirm or refute other beliefs at the instant of utterance and as unfalsifiable expressions of subjective conviction they were foreign to science. M. Schlick defended the phenomenal theory, in his essay 'On the foundation of knowledge',<sup>10</sup> partly by admitting the momentary character of constataions but declaring it to be harmless, arguing that they were used antecedently to suggest and consequently, at any time the question arose, to confirm derived, theoretical statements, and partly by criticizing the conventionalism of the alternative theory proposed by Neurath, which, by regarding the acceptance of basic statements as a matter of social convention, was open to the objections traditionally raised against the coherence theory. But there are other difficulties connected with the privacy of phenomenal basic statements which undermine them more effectively: first, that our private languages seem to be based on public language rather than the other way round and, secondly, that a strictly private language is, according to Wittgenstein, an impossibility.

If it is phenomenal statements that are basic, not merely must we say that all public statements, to the extent that they are justified at all, are inferred from or supported by them, we must also admit something much harder to accommodate: that all public statements acquire their meaning from correlation with statements in an *antecedently understood* private language. It is plain that the private language we actually have, that in which we report our own sensations and emotions, is taught to us by other people on the basis of our publicly observable behaviour. Furthermore, we draw on the public language in developing it. We describe our sensations in terms of the material things that cause them and our emotions in terms of the behaviour to which they incline us. The theory that phenomenal statements are logically intuitive could be saved only by claiming that the inference from them to other statements was implicit. Similarly, the theory that phenomenal statements are ostensive can be saved only by the claim that basic statements are originally private in a double sense, being expressed in some internal symbolism or imagery as well as referring to private entities, and

## *The foundations of knowledge*

that we must have acquired the capacity to use this inner language not from teaching by others but by having made it up for ourselves. The teaching of language as a social activity clearly begins with statements about material things. If phenomenal statements alone are basic, we must come to understand the statements about material things that we are taught by correlating them with the already understood phenomenal statements of our inner language which are present to our minds in the circumstances in which the teaching is taking place.

In his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein argued that this exceedingly unpalatable conjecture was in fact a senseless one. A language is a practice of utterance governed by rules which distinguish correct utterances from incorrect ones. It might seem that a man could construct a private, inner language by naming a particular experience, and adopting the rule that every subsequent experience of the same kind should have the same name. But how, he asks, are we to tell whether any subsequent experience is of the same kind? It will not do to say that I call this experience 'x' because I remember the experience used to introduce the term 'x' and see that they are the same. For it is always possible that my memory is mistaken in any particular case and this is a doubt that I can never set at rest since memory is my sole mode of access to the standard experiences by means of which the terms in my private language were introduced. In these circumstances the private introduction of names for experiences is an 'empty ceremony'.

The phenomenal basic statements that report sense-impressions are expressed in ordinary language by means of the verbs 'looks', 'appears' and 'seems'. To say that one is having a sense-impression of a brown box is to say that there looks or appears or seems to be a brown box where one is, or that it seems or appears that one can see a brown box. It is clear that in every perceptual situation, which has been defined as one in which we perceive something or think that we do, there appears to be something present to us. The supporters of the theory of a phenomenal basis for knowledge go on from this to conclude that in every perceptual situation there is a private object, an appearance or sense-datum, which is directly present to my mind in the sense that I know for certain that this private object exists. These appearances are never identical with material things or with any parts of them for they are private to a single observer, depend for their existence, like the ideas of Berkeley's philosophy, on the fact that they are being perceived and have all and only the properties that they appear to have.

For some time doubts have been felt as to the validity of this

transition from the unquestionable statement that in a perceptual situation I appear to be aware of a material thing to the conclusion that in a perceptual situation I am aware of a non-material appearance. It has been held that this 'reification of appearances' is mistaken and that it commits the 'sense-datum fallacy'. As it stands the move is not obviously legitimate; but it is not obviously illegitimate either. In general, this kind of grammatical transformation of verb into noun is not puzzling or disputable. There is no objection to saying 'he gave the door a kick' instead of 'he kicked the door' or 'she took up a position at the end of the line' instead of 'she placed herself at the end of the line'. But this absence of trouble might be ascribed to the fact that we do not exploit these permitted transformations to ask questions about the nature of kicks and positions and do not assume that they are some sort of objects in the way that doors and lines are. Again there are transformations of this general variety which we should be less willing to endorse. We should not be pleased with the replacement of 'it is probably dark down there' by 'there is a darkness-probability down there'.

In an article on 'The problem of perception'<sup>11</sup> I have tried to show that statements about what appears to be the case are used in two broadly distinguishable ways, in the primary and more usual of which the reification of appearances is unacceptable. In this primary, epistemic sense of 'appears' to say that there appears to be, or that it appears that there is, such-and-such a thing here is not to describe the current state of one's visual field but rather to express an inclination to believe that there actually is such-and-such a thing here, in other words, to make a tentative, qualified statement about the material world. 'It appears that  $p$ ', I suggested, is the way in which we make a qualified claim about observable facts when the evidence is experiential, 'it is probable that  $p$ ' being more appropriate to the case when the evidence is propositional. An epistemic statement about what appears is not, then, a description of appearances, it is a hesitant statement about public, material objects.

There is, however, a secondary, derivative, use of the verb 'appears' in which it is employed for some rather specialized purposes to describe the current character of our sensory fields. At the instance of oculists and art teachers we can, by an effort of attention, suppose that, for example, what we see is all situated on a flat surface a few feet in front of us in conditions of normal illumination. We then describe our visual field by saying what we should be inclined to believe was in front of us if we in fact knew that these special and peculiar conditions of observation prevailed. The result is a genuinely phenomenological statement about patches of colour of various shapes and sizes arranged in a certain way. The conditions

mentioned are chosen for the purpose of phenomenological description because they are visually ideal, are those in which, when they actually do obtain, the danger of visual error is minimized. The phenomenological use of the verb 'appears', it should be noticed, is not merely a rather sophisticated one, it is also a development of the more usual, epistemic, one. We say 'there appears to be an  $x$  here' when we are not sure that the conditions of observation are ideal or that they are unideal in a way that we can allow for. We could say instead, 'I should say that there definitely is an  $x$  here if I were sure that the conditions of observation are what I am taking them to be; but I am not sure of it.' More important is the effort of attention that we have to make in order to give a phenomenological description. We have to see things as we know, or have very good reason to believe, they are not. Now the ability to adopt this phenomenological frame of mind is one that has to be learnt after that for the perception of the material world has already been mastered. The language in which its findings are expressed is derived from that with which we describe material things and the rules defining the attitude involved are stated in public, material terms. So, unless we first make up a private phenomenological language for ourselves, ordinary statements about material things cannot acquire their sense from correlation with basic phenomenal statements. Furthermore, the *phenomenological attitude or frame of mind*, in which by an effort of attention all our background knowledge of where we are and what is around us is suppressed and replaced by a feigned assumption of ideal conditions, is inevitably exclusive of the ordinary frame of mind in which we confront the observable world. We cannot look at the world ordinarily and phenomenologically at the same moment. It follows from this, and is fairly obvious on its own account, that we are very rarely in a phenomenological frame of mind. It cannot, therefore, be the case that our beliefs about material objects are generally inferred from phenomenological statements about appearances or sense-data. For the very much greater part of our conscious life the phenomenological evidence is simply not there for statements about material things to be inferred from. Unless we can be subconsciously in a phenomenological attitude at the same time as we are consciously looking at things in the ordinary way, and unless we subconsciously register the deliverances of this attitude, the only alternative to the view that statements about material things do not have a phenomenological foundation is that the very great majority of our beliefs about the material world never have any justification at all.

Some empirical confirmation for the view that we are only very exceptionally aware of the phenomenologically describable state of

our sense-fields is provided by the fact that if asked for a phenomenological report of a past experience, we normally have to reconstruct it from our recollection of the material scene we actually perceived, together with our background knowledge of where we were situated within the scene. What we can reasonably do is to infer that in every perceptual situation our sense-fields are in some appropriate condition, and we can work out what this was in any particular case by working out what phenomenological report we should have given at the time if we had been in the appropriate frame of mind. These conjectured states of our sense-fields may be interpreted as the phenomenological causes of our perceptual beliefs. We can refer to them, for instance, when we want to explain errors of perception. But this is not to admit them as reasons for our perceptual beliefs. Though they can be used as reasons for such beliefs in exceptional cases, and then only in the light of antecedently established correlations between the phenomenological condition and the observable state of affairs in question, they cannot serve as reasons in all cases in which we have some reason for the perceptual beliefs we form.

In its ordinary use an epistemic appearance statement of the form 'there appears to be an *x* here' does not, then, describe a substantive appearance. Its function is to make the assertion that there is an *x* here in a guarded, qualified way. It makes clear that the speaker regards the statement as no more than probable. We can raise these statements to higher probabilities and even certainty, in Moore's sense of absence of reasonable doubt rather than incorrigibility,<sup>12</sup> by assembling other consilient statements of the same sort. 'There appears to be an orange here, but perhaps not, since wax fruit is to be found in places like this. But it also appears to be cold and hard and this room does not appear to be refrigerated.' This artificially circumspect soliloquy shows how epistemic appearance statements mutually corroborate each other. More usually the requisite corroborative material is already to hand embedded in our background knowledge (in the example given, perhaps, that this room is a prison larder).

What I suggest is that these epistemic appearance statements are ways of affirming, in an explicitly qualified fashion, the experientially probable basic statements whose possibility was argued for earlier. To say 'there is an orange here' may be no more than probably true. In saying 'there appears to be an orange here' the fact that it is no more than probable is made explicit. By putting in the explicit qualification the statement is protected from the kind of falsification wrought by the discovery that the object involved is in fact made of wax. These appearance statements have, then, a kind of certainty. But it is rather the unqualified statements which we have an

inclination to believe, and not the qualified appearance statements associated with them, that are basic on the theory that I am advancing. Ordinary statements about material things, I claim, are, as they appear to be, both the ostensive basis in terms of which all other statements are introduced and the intuitive basis by reference to which they are confirmed. In themselves, they are never more than probable. But associated, as they commonly are, with a large background of other statements, probable and certain, they can attain certainty, at least in the straightforward, Moorean sense.

It remains to be shown how, in the process of ostensive teaching of ordinary statements about material things, they are endowed with the *experiential probability* that the theory ascribes to them. This can be shown by a consideration of the way in which their meaning is learnt. I learn when to say 'this is an orange', or its infantile equivalent 'orange', by being exposed to oranges in carefully selected situations, that is, where my teachers have assured themselves that the object involved really is an orange, and not a piece of wax fruit or a piece of soap or a rubber ball, and where the conditions of observation are favourable. Equipped by this training I start to make use on my own of the statement I have learnt and, still unaware, in my ostensive innocence, of the existence of orange-like non-oranges, and again of the effect of fog on the look of traffic lights or of distance on the look of large orange globes, I make mistakes. These mistakes are corrected and my understanding of the statement 'this is an orange' undergoes a change. It becomes loaded with theory, as it were, for I find out about the insides of oranges, their characteristic taste and their causal dependence on orange trees. I learn that vision is not enough to certify the belief that there is an orange here. But unless my utterances of 'this is an orange' are more often mistaken than not, this saddening achievement of conceptual maturity will not deprive the statement of its intrinsic probability.

An important consequence of this discussion is the undermining of an assumption which has not been questioned hitherto. It has been assumed that a statement is either ostensive or verbally introduced, that it must be wholly the one or wholly the other. According to this theory of basic statements ordinary assertions about material things are first taught ostensively, but this correlation with observable states of affairs does not complete the teaching process. It has to be supplemented by knowledge of the circumstances in which our inclination to believe something about our material surroundings must be controlled by collateral information about those surroundings. On this theory there are no purely ostensive statements. Partly ostensive basic statements acquire an intrinsic probability

from experiential evidence alone, but this is never complete, never sufficient to render them certain. It may well be that Hampshire is correct in saying that the ostensive conditions under which the use of a statement is taught constitute the criteria of its certainty in so far as *purely ostensive* statements are concerned. But, in the language we actually have, the basic statements in which our observations are reported are not purely ostensive. So the conjecture of Price and Ayer that there could be a language whose basic statements were no more than probable is confirmed in the best possible way, by the fact that what they envisage as a possibility is true of the language we actually have. The initial infinite regress arguments proved that some statements must be ostensively learnt, and that some statements must derive their justification from experience rather than other statements. But these two requirements are satisfied by an account of basic statements which represents them as initially, but not wholly, taught by ostension and as justified to some extent, but not beyond reasonable doubt, by experience.

A complete rejection of the doctrine that knowledge has foundations implies the acceptance of a coherence theory of truth and knowledge. This theory had a central place in the absolute idealism of Bradley, who worked out its consequences with great elaboration. Bradley's idealism was the dominant academic philosophy against which Russell and Moore rebelled, and Russell's earliest strictly philosophical writings, in the first decade of the century, were directly concerned to refute the coherence theory. Some of his criticisms do not apply to it if, as in this discussion, it is restricted to the domain of empirical fact. Certainly we must accept the truth of the laws of logic if the concept of coherence is to be applied; but there is no circularity in this if it is only the truth of non-logical statements that coherence is used to define. Again there is nothing self-refuting, or rather self-enslaving, about the consequential thesis that no statement is wholly true if the reference of this thesis is not supposed to include itself. Indeed, if Russell's theory of types, by which all self-reference is ruled out, is accepted, the thesis cannot be formulated in this self-destructive way. There remains the crucial difficulty that coherence, while it may be the necessary condition of the truth of a body of statements, cannot be the sufficient condition, since more than one system of statements, all of which are coherent with the other members of the system, can be constructed where there will be members of one system that are incompatible with members of another. The same point is less formally made by the argument that the business of justification can never begin unless



some of the statements up for consideration have some ground for acceptance other than their relation to the others.

In the light of these criticisms recent philosophers have seldom openly endorsed a full-blooded coherence theory. Nevertheless, several have taken up positions which commit them to it by implication. The left-wing positivists of the 1930s, abandoning Schlick's view that basic statements were the direct and incorrigible reports of experience, concluded that their nature and their acceptance was a matter of convention. Unwilling to admit that any sense could be attached to the idea that some statements rested on experiential evidence, because of its purportedly metaphysical assertion of a relation between language and fact, they seemed to have no other recourse than conventionalism. Their attempt to show that the actual convention they proposed was not an arbitrary one by pointing to its coincidence with that adopted by scientists, was unsuccessful. In the first place the expedient was viciously regressive in presuming the antecedent truth of some statement about the basic statements actually adopted by scientists. Secondly, it inverted the logical relation between the concepts of a scientist and a basic statement. It is not that a basic statement is one that a scientist accepts without question or further enquiry, but rather that a scientist is one who systematically exposes his beliefs to the judgment of basic statements.

Two negative views of the doctrine of foundations of more recent origin, which avoid difficulties by the simple expedient of failing to present an alternative to it, deserve some consideration. In his *Structure of Appearance*<sup>13</sup> N. Goodman rejects the concept of an asymmetrical relation of epistemological priority between basic and derived statements. In his view logical priority is always relative to a particular system and it is well known that the same body of assertions can be equally well derived from different, alternative sets of axioms or primitive propositions. Applying this to systems setting out the definitional relations of empirical concepts, he argues that it is a matter of free choice for the builder of the system as to which concepts he selects as primitive and undefined. He should be guided in his choice by such strictly formal considerations as that of the simplicity and elegance of one choice as compared with another. Certainly there is a formal sense of priority or basicness which is relative to a given way of setting up a system of statements. But philosophical analysts are not concerned simply with the construction of formally consistent systems: their aim, in the first instance, is to set out, as systematically as possible, the order of logical dependence of the apparatus of concepts and statements that we actually

possess. But more than this, a formally consistent system may be epistemologically inconsistent. If Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of private languages is valid, a system in which physical concepts are defined in terms of strictly phenomenal ones, though it might be perfectly consistent as a formal system, would nevertheless be epistemologically impossible and incapable of being used as a language.

In his *Sense and Sensibilia*<sup>14</sup> J. L. Austin delivers a lively but somewhat superficial onslaught on the doctrine of foundations, which he mistakenly identifies with the theory that our knowledge of matters of fact must rest on an incorrigible basis. He agrees that such philosophers as Ayer are right to hold that the truth of some statements must be determined by non-verbal reality, and he asserts that most words are learnt ostensively. To accept these points is to concede the truth of the greater part of the doctrine of foundations, and so a more precise account of the actual object of Austin's criticism must be sought. At one stage of the argument he singles out for criticism the view that it is the particular business of some sub-class of sentences to be evidence for or to verify the rest. Against it he says that no kind of *sentence*, understood as a form of words in a given meaning, could do this job. A given sentence will sometimes be used to express a conclusion from evidence, at others to make a direct report of observation. A given sentence can be used to make many different statements, depending on who is making them and on where and when they are made. This is true but doubly irrelevant. The doctrine of foundations can perfectly well be formulated in terms of statements and to the extent that it has not been it is because of the peculiarities of the German word 'Satz'. But, in fact, this is not to go far enough, since two people can make the same statement but only one of them be making a basic statement. Suppose A, looking down a well, says, 'There is water at the bottom.' B, who is standing beside him and not looking down, may affirm that there is water at the bottom at very much the same time and in exactly the same words because he has heard what A said and believes A to be a reliable person. In strictness we should perhaps say that a given statement can be made as basic or as derived. But provided we realize that to say that A's statement is basic is not to say that the same statement made by B is also basic and is *a fortiori* not to say that every statement made by the use of the sentences A utters is basic, no confusion need be caused by the less pedantic way of speaking.

Austin argues penetratingly against the view that there are any strictly incorrigible statements. Every statement can, he maintains, be retracted, and any that are so understood that their seeming

to their speaker to be true is a guarantee of their truth, are not really descriptive at all. This, as we have seen, does not invalidate the doctrine of foundations. He goes on to say that in general we do not have to produce or even have evidence for our assertions about material objects. As far as this refers to propositional evidence I have argued that it is correct. But it is not a criticism of the theory of basic statements, only of the identification of them with phenomenal reports. If it refers to experiential evidence as well, it is false, for it suggests that we can assert any material object statement with justification by mere whim. What he perhaps intended to say was that we do not ordinarily call the experience that justifies a statement about material things evidence for it. This would not be very interesting even if it were true. But if a man who, looking into a room, says, 'There's a fire in here,' is asked if he has any evidence for saying so, when he has in fact seen the fire, it would be ridiculous for him to answer 'No'. The proper answer would be, 'Yes, I can see it'.

The real point of Austin's criticism is his claim that 'in general . . . any kind of statement could state evidence for any other kind.' 'It is not true, in general,' he goes on, 'that general statements are "based on" singular statements and not vice versa; my belief that *this* animal will eat turnips may be based on the belief that most pigs eat turnips; though certainly, in different circumstances, I might have supported the claim that most pigs eat turnips by saying that *this* pig eats them at any rate.' It is true that the belief of any particular man that a given pig, now before him, eats turnips may be based on and owe what justification it has to his antecedent conviction that most pigs eat turnips. But there is an obvious asymmetry in the logical relation between the two beliefs. For the general belief, although formally evidence for the singular one by itself and independently of whether there is any reason to accept it, will actually confirm or justify it only if it is itself already supported. This support will normally be provided by the establishment of a number of statements of the form 'this pig eats turnips', and of not more than a very few of the form 'this pig does not eat turnips'. This recourse to the empirical basis may be postponed. That most pigs eat turnips may be inferred from the further generalizations that most curly-tailed animals eat turnips and that all pigs are curly-tailed. And these, if they are really to support it, must themselves rest either on singular statements about particular curly-tailed animals eating turnips and particular pigs being curly-tailed, or else on further generalizations which possess, at some finite remove, singular evidence of the same kind. In other words, general statements can only be contingently or derivatively evidence for singular

ones, whereas singular statements are the primary and indispensable evidence for generalizations. We can have sufficient reason for thinking that this pig eats turnips without having any justified belief about what pigs in general do; but we cannot have reason for thinking that most pigs eat turnips unless we have some justified beliefs about the eating habits of particular pigs. That most pigs eat turnips, then, while it does not presuppose for its justification the establishment of any particular statement to the effect that this pig does so, does presuppose that some statements of this kind have been confirmed or established. But the statement that this pig does so, while it may owe its justification to the antecedent establishment of some general statement about pigs in a particular case, does not in general require the establishment or confirmation of any such generalization.

Most specific issues in the theory of knowledge can be conceived as problems about the epistemological priority of one class of statements to another. It has been questioned whether statements about impressions, present memories, behaviour, observables, natural events and feelings of pleasure and pain are epistemologically prior, respectively, to statements about objects, past happenings, mental states, theoretical entities, supernatural beings and values or whether, on the other hand, the types of statement coupled in this list are logically independent of one another. One does not have to accept the reducibility of any of the items in the second part of the list to their partners in the first part to attach sense to the concept of epistemological priority which is involved in the theories that they are so reducible. And whatever may be said about these contentious cases the priority of singular statements to general ones is really too obvious to need labouring.

The most substantial criticism of the doctrine of foundations that has been put forward in recent times is that made by K. R. Popper, in his *Logic of Scientific Discovery*<sup>15</sup> particularly in the fifth chapter, and in his *Conjectures and Refutations*,<sup>16</sup> particularly in the introductory chapter. Popper's theory of knowledge is a sustained attack on a traditional body of ideas which he divides into empiricism, the theory that the foundation of knowledge is observation, and inductivism, the theory that knowledge is developed by the generalization of theories from this observational basis. He rejects these theories both as psychological or genetic accounts of the way in which knowledge actually grows, and as logical reconstructions of the order of dependence in which the elements of knowledge stand as regards their justification. On the matter of growth he maintains that theories precede observation and are not, and cannot be, mechanically

excoigitated from it. There is no such thing as pure observation; we must always observe under the guidance of some hypothesis which directs our attention by telling us what to look for. Theories or hypotheses are not derived from observable facts by applying the rules of a non-existent inductive logic to those facts. They may be suggested by facts to some extent but an indispensable part is played in the business of theoretical conjecture by the background of knowledge already achieved, as well as an understanding of the unsolved problems that it presents, and by the constructive or imaginative power of the individual theorist. This seems truer of the more strictly theoretical parts of science than of the instantial laws of, say, natural history, and, again, truer of scientific theorizing than of the broad and continuous tide of subconscious, or at any rate not consciously directed, generalization that augments our ordinary knowledge of the world. On the matter of justification he points to the logical asymmetry between general theories and singular descriptions because of which theories can be falsified by observations but not established or verified by them. Science, then, as the most developed method of acquiring knowledge, is defined by him as a method of resolutely seeking for observations that will falsify our theoretical conjectures. It requires us to formulate our theories in as falsifiable a way as possible and to expose them as vigorously as possible to the test of observation and experiment and to the criticism of others. Our theories can never be certain, but to the extent that they have escaped falsification, without being so formulated as to avoid it, they are corroborated and worthy of provisional acceptance.

Bringing his accounts of the historical order of discovery and of the logical order of justification together, the following picture of the growth of knowledge results: first of all, theories, in the form of general statements, are put forward as conjectures; from them singular statements about observables are derived by deductive logic; these observations are empirically tested; if they pass the tests, the theory is so far corroborated, if they fail, it is refuted and must be replaced by another. The nature of the empirical test to which the observation statements are subjected is plainly crucial in this progression. Popper is prepared to describe these vital singular statements about observable states of affairs as basic, but he does not admit that they can be regarded as certain or as descriptions of experiences. It would appear, he argues, that three possible views can be taken about the status of basic observation statements. First, a dogmatism which accepts them as true without question; secondly, a psychologism which somehow reduces them to or identifies them with perceptual experiences; finally, the acceptance of an infinite regress. His own view of the matter is presented as a

combination of elements from all three theories which he believes is free from the defects of all of them.

His theory is that, in genuinely rational and scientific thinking, we adopt as basic statements about observable material things and events situated at a definite time and place. The acceptance of basic statements is a matter of convention and thus far dogmatic, but not viciously so since the convention can be abandoned if the convention of some other investigator comes into conflict with it. There is nothing permanent about the convention, and so the dogmatism involved is of a harmless, because temporary and provisional, kind. If a basic statement is challenged, it can itself be exposed to test by deriving further basic statements from it, together with already accepted theories. This possibility introduces an infinite regress, but it, too, is not vicious. We do not have to go on deducing basic statements from one another *ad infinitum*, but only from any given basic statement if anybody challenges it. And in fact most statements of the form he takes as basic are not challenged. Finally, a measure of dependence on perceptual experience is introduced to explain why we make the conventions that we do, why we choose to accept so very few of the basic statements from among all those that, being significant, are formally suited for adoption. Experience does not, he says, verify basic statements but it does motivate us to adopt some rather than others.

This is an original and important attempt to solve the problem of the basis of knowledge, and I believe it to be very nearly successful but I do not think it can be accepted as it stands. The first difficulty concerns the idea that experiences do not justify but simply motivate the acceptance of certain singular statements about observables. We may assume that this motivation is not inexorable and can be resisted, in particular, by those who have reflected on the principles of rational thinking. If it could not be resisted, speculations about how one ought, if rational, to manage one's beliefs would be devoid of point. The vital difficulty is this: either the fact that an observational belief is motivated by experience is a reason for accepting it, in which case experience is not just a motivation, or else no belief whatever is justified at all. Unless experience actually supports the beliefs that it prompts us to hold, why should we choose to adopt them in preference to those which are prompted by wishful thinking or the desire to save ourselves trouble or any other emotional factor? In practice, to the extent that we are rational, we resist the promptings of hope and laziness because of their well-established tendency to conflict with the beliefs we are induced to form by experience. But why should we show this partiality as between the different emotional determinants of belief unless there is some necessary con-

nexion between experience and the acceptability of the beliefs that it inspires in us?

No conjecture, whether theory or observation statement, derives any support from the mere fact that someone entertains or conjectures it. Before it deserves acceptance a theory must be corroborated by the discovery that the basic statements which could falsify it are in fact false. But, on Popper's theory, should this not apply to basic statements as well? Either a basic statement derives some support from the experience that underlies its conventional adoption, in which case it is qualified to refute or corroborate antecedently conjectured theories, or the convention is a completely arbitrary one. If basic statements have no intrinsic probability, then the derivation of further basic statements from them cannot, for however long it is continued, add anything to their justification.

Why, furthermore, should conventional adoption be restricted to basic statements and not extended to theories themselves? For, as Popper has argued, theories are just as psychologically intuitive, just as much matters of subjective conviction, as basic statements are. It will not do to say that it is because they can at least be subjected to the negative test of exposure to falsification, for this is true of basic statements also. Popper might argue that we confine conventional adoption to basic statements motivated by experience because we find that there is very little disagreement about them, whereas there is a great deal of disagreement about theories and about basic statements motivated by wishful thinking or laziness. But, waiving the somewhat rhetorical objection that asks how this comforting fact is discovered, we must enquire whether it is simply a happy accident. Even if it is correct it only shows that the most economical or socially harmonious way to go about controlling our beliefs will be by subjecting them to the test of what experience has motivated. But is this relevant? The corroboration of theories will be accelerated by this convention and it will be a more sociable affair, but will it be any better calculated to approximate to truth than the convention of accepting basic statements on grounds of their euphony? Why should the fact that it satisfies our desires for economy and social harmony be regarded as justifying the second-order convention of adopting only those basic statements that are motivated by experience? Popper, in fact, has not really escaped his trilemma. If no statement is worthy of acceptance until it has been corroborated by way of the consequences deducible from it, then a vicious infinite regress ensues and no statement can be justified at all. If some or all statements are justified to some extent by the mere fact of being entertained or conjectured, then his position is arbitrarily dogmatic. The only alternative is to allow himself to be impaled, at least a

little, on the remaining horn of psychologism by allowing that basic statements can derive some support from the experiences that motivate them and are not entirely dependent for justification on the consequences that can be derived from them.

This modification of Popper's theory of basic statements, which holds that they acquire some, perhaps small, initial probability from the perceptual experiences that prompt them, is in effect the corrigibilist theory considered by Price. It is wholly consistent with Popper's fallibilist conviction that no statement of fact is ever finally and unalterably established, and that every statement, basic or theoretical, can be corroborated by its consequences. It maintains that the structure of our knowledge has foundations, but does not hold that these are absolutely solid and incorrigible, and while it asserts that it is through their connexion with experience that basic statements derive that initial support without which no statement whatever would have any justification, it does not require them to be mere descriptions of experience. If the truth of the matter does lie in some such close interweaving of the correspondence and coherence theories, it would at once explain why the conflict between them has continued for so long and bring it to a conclusion which would not require the unconditional surrender of either contestant.

## Notes

- 1 *Language, Truth and Logic*, Gollancz, 1936.
- 2 Clarendon Press, 1936.
- 3 In M. Black (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis*, Cornell, 1950.
- 4 Hutchinson, 1949.
- 5 Open Court, 1946.
- 6 *Analysis*, ch. II.
- 7 In *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vii, 1953, pp. 230-45.
- 8 H. H. Price, *Perception*, Methuen, 1932, ch. I.
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- 11 In *Mind*, vol. lxiv, 1955.
- 12 G. E. Moore, 'Certainty', *Philosophical Papers*, Allen & Unwin, 1959.
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'What is the case?' because they are not propositions and cannot be true or false; that is, they are not theoretical.

Some views about what these answers are, if not propositions, are unacceptable because their account of the way in which they are practical and non-theoretical fails to allow for the possibility of accepting an answer but not acting, or deciding to act, in accordance with it. The view that these answers express decisions or intentions is of this sort. The view that they express feelings or attitudes avoids this objection, but few emotivists have produced an argument where it is required, in support of the contention that these practical answers, contrary to appearances, are not propositions.

### Hume's argument

Hume is an exception. In the chapters of his *Treatise*, 'Of the influencing motives of the will' and 'Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason' he brings forward considerations that are important and fundamental enough to provide a basis, if valid, for the account given by him and many other empiricists of the rest of morals, including the more conspicuous and popular doctrine that 'ought' cannot be deduced from 'is'. He argues that reason is essentially theoretical and that practical judgments cannot be also theoretical. 'Reason,' he says, 'is the discovery of truth and falsehood': it is therefore what he calls 'representative', i.e. its products represent or misrepresent other things and are not, like the things represented, 'original existences' in the world of realities. He does not, however, jump to the sceptical conclusion that reason cannot be practical by flatly asserting, contrary to appearances, that practical judgments cannot be propositions, i.e. 'representative'. He takes the more plausible step of treating practical judgments as practical in this sense, that they are connected with action in such a way that if such judgments could be conclusions of reason, so also could actions; and it follows that since actions, having no truth-value, because they are not 'representative' but 'original existences', cannot be conclusions of reason, neither can practical judgments. 'Reason,' says Hume, 'is perfectly inert.'

Hume's argument can be represented as follows. A reason, of whatever sort, is, as a reason, a fact or truth from which something follows. In being a reason, therefore, the fact or truth can be treated as the premise of an argument, and what the reason is a reason for is what follows from it, the conclusion of the argument, something that must in consequence have a truth-value. It follows that there cannot be a reason for doing anything; for actions cannot be true or false, i.e. they cannot follow, in the appropriate sense, from any

but another possibility is to contrast doing with believing. Hume's contrast excludes both doing and believing from what is theoretical. The distinction as I presented it in my first paragraph was analogous to Hume's: the practical question 'What is to be done?' was contrasted with 'What is the case?', and because actions and propositions are such an oddly-assorted pair this formulation of the questions imparted to the practical-theoretical distinction an effect of maximum contrast. But doing and believing are rather less oddly-assorted, and the question 'What is to be done?' contrasts less bewilderingly with the question 'What is to be believed?'

The fact is that if these philosophical terms 'practical reason' and 'theoretical reason' are translated into more familiar language we find that reference to what Hume would have called 'original existences' is a normal context of the concept of reason; and that the notion of practical reason signified by the common idea of, for example, a reason for doing something contrasts with a notion of theoretical reason that is signified not by the idea of a reason for the truth of a proposition, as Hume's account would require, but by the idea of, for example, a reason for believing something. In other words, the phrase 'a reason' occurs typically in harness with a psychological verb, indicating that what the reason justifies is the personal feature designated by the verb: as in 'a reason for believing, thinking, supposing, feeling convinced, maintaining, concluding that . . .'; and also 'reason to believe, think, suppose, feel convinced, maintain, conclude that . . .'. Certainly propositions and theories, what a person says, asserts, claims or believes, are among the sorts of things that can be justifiable, reasonable, rational and logical. But words of this latter group can also describe personal features designated by psychological verbs: 'it's justifiable, reasonable, rational, logical to believe, think, suppose, feel convinced, conclude, say, assert, claim that . . .'. In a certain way these latter locutions give the meaning of the former, but not vice versa: to say that what he believes is reasonable is to say that what he believes it is reasonable to believe. I mean that in the two statements 'What he believes is reasonable' and 'What he believes is true' the expression 'is reasonable' is not a predicate of the proposition he believes in the sense in which the expression 'is true' is a predicate of that proposition. If what he believes is e.g. that Smith donates to charity, to say 'What he believes is true' is to imply that it is true that Smith donates to charity; but to say 'What he believes is reasonable' is not to imply that it is reasonable that Smith donates to charity. If it means anything at all, the statement 'Is it reasonable that Smith donates to charity' means 'It is reasonable that Smith should donate to charity'; and on this interpretation what is said to be reasonable is not the original

argument is a reason for believing the conclusion. I have therefore in effect admitted that arguments are among the sort of things that can be reasonable or unreasonable, and arguments in this logician's sense are not 'original existences' like actions and psychological states. I am willing to admit these last two points; but this is not enough to save Hume's argument. For his case, with its principle that reason is perfectly inert, presupposes that arguments and their conclusions are the only sorts of things that can be reasonable or unreasonable. My contention is that if there can be reasonable arguments there can be reasons for believing things; and that what a reason is a reason for cannot be the conclusion of an argument. Thus the fact that an action, not being true or false, cannot be the conclusion of an argument (i.e. that reason cannot be practical in this sense) does not show that there cannot be reasons for doing things (i.e. that reason cannot be practical in this sense).

Hume's basic mistake is a misconception about the way in which practical reason, if there could be such a thing, would be practical, i.e. connected with action. The connexion would be a connexion between reason in practical judgments, i.e. judgments of conduct, and reason in conduct itself; so that a prior question is, in what way are practical judgments practical, i.e. connected with action? One thing that could be said would be this, that practical judgments are practical in the sense that they can be conformed to or contravened by actions that do not thereby confirm or falsify them. This being so, it might seem, as it apparently did to Hume, that if reason could be practical, so that practical judgments would be possible conclusions of reasonable arguments, actions conforming to them would also have to be possible conclusions of such arguments. But this is an error. If reason is practical it is so in this way, that for a practical judgment to be the conclusion of a reasonable argument implies not that an action could be a conclusion of that argument but that the premises of the argument, in being reasons for believing the practical judgment, e.g. for believing that one ought to do a certain thing, are necessarily also reasons for acting in conformity with the judgment, i.e. for doing that thing.

### Reasons and causes

Hume plainly construes the claim that reason can be practical to mean that reason can cause action; and his view that reason is inert is intended as a denial of this. Hume might therefore have thought of reasons for doing things as causes of action, and thus of reasons for believing things as causes of belief. I have in effect agreed with

### *Practical reason*

Hume that propositions cannot have causes, but I have argued that the sorts of things for which there can be reasons are not propositions but 'original existences', things that can have causes. I want now, then, to consider the question whether reason is substantive in this way, that a reason for something can be in some sense a cause of it. To do this I shall look at a fairly recent version of the view that reasons are not causes.

This view could be represented as follows. The question 'Why do you believe that  $p$ ?' can be answered either by an explanation in terms of causes, which shows how the belief originated, or by an attempted justification in terms of reasons, which seeks to support the truth of the belief. These answers are logically independent: the history or chronology of a belief implies nothing about its justifiability or logic, and vice versa. Moreover every belief must have both a history and a logic; for they are concerned each with a different element of the belief. 'Believe' is a psychological verb and the history of a belief is therefore a psychological story; what is believed, a proposition, is a logical entity, having only logical properties and relations, which are non-temporal.

My argument that what a reason justifies is not what can have a truth-value, even when the reason is theoretical, but, e.g. believing something, which is psychological, might be thought to imply that reasons can be causes. For certainly things psychological have causes. But my argument does not imply that the reasons are the causes. There may, for a start, be a reason for believing something though no one in fact believes that thing. 'Believe' is a psychological verb, but in the phrase 'a reason for believing' it is not used to refer to a belief that somebody actually has. This is still true even when somebody has a reason for believing something: to say that somebody has a reason for believing something is not to imply that he or anybody else does in fact believe that thing. But what about the expression 'his reason for believing that  $p$ '? To specify somebody's reason for believing that  $p$  is of course to imply that he believes that  $p$ . But is that reason the cause of his believing that  $p$ ? Whether it is or not, the view that reasons are not causes might still be protected by the observation that somebody's reason for believing that  $p$  is not necessarily a reason, it may be no reason at all, for believing that  $p$ ; unparadoxically, a reason for believing that  $p$  is necessarily a good reason, whereas somebody's reason might be a bad one. In other words, unlike the notion of a cause of something, an explanation, the notion of a reason for believing something, a justification, is normative, not descriptive. This is the core of the view that reasons are not causes.

It might seem to follow, and some philosophers give the impression

of thinking, that bad reasons are causes but good reasons are not. The idea gets its support from the following considerations. If Smith is asked 'Why do you believe that tomorrow will be fine?' he may answer this by saying 'My reason is that there was a red sky this evening.' Now it may be false that there was a red sky this evening, and even if it were true that fact may not be a good reason for believing that tomorrow will be fine. But if Smith's reply was honest, it must be true of *him* that he believes that there was a red sky this evening and also that if there is a red sky in the evening the following day will be fine. This is why, if Jones now asks me 'Why does Smith believe that tomorrow will be fine?' and I think that Smith's reason was a bad one, I can reply 'Because he thinks that there was a red sky this evening and also that if there is a red sky in the evening the following day will be fine.' This reply, unlike Smith's, does not attempt to justify Smith's belief, it simply explains it; it does not give reasons for believing that tomorrow will be fine, it says what makes Smith believe this. But it does not follow from all this that bad reasons, being no reasons at all, are causes in some sense in which good reasons cannot be causes. For clearly, my explanation of Smith's belief would have been equally true even if his reason had been a good one: it is simply that this explanation is logically independent of any assessment of his reason as bad or good.

What follows is that Smith's reason, good or bad, is not a cause. His reason is that something is the case, something that has a truth-value, a proposition or putative fact, e.g. that there was a red sky this evening. But this proposition could not have been his reason unless he had believed it, whether it was true or false. When somebody believes something, and for the reason that something is the case, what explains his belief is not that something is the case, not the reason, good or bad, but his believing that it is the case; e.g. Smith believes that tomorrow will be fine because he believes that there was a red sky this evening. Of course, Smith might have answered my question 'Why do you believe that tomorrow will be fine?' by saying 'My reason is that there was, I believe, a red sky this evening.' But this use of the psychological verb 'believe' is parenthetical. To put the matter summarily: a reason for believing that  $p$  is the fact that  $q$  if the truth or probable truth of  $p$  follows from  $q$ ; and somebody's reason for believing that  $p$  is the fact that  $q$  if that person believes that  $p$  because he believes that  $q$  and also that  $p$  follows from  $q$ .

My claim that these reasons are not causes, however, gives no support to another part of the view under consideration, namely that because reasons are not causes the question 'Why do you believe that  $p$ ?' must always have two logically independent answers,

one concerned with justification and logical matters, the other concerned with psychological origins. The attempted justification 'My reason for believing that tomorrow will be fine is that there was a red sky this evening,' even if the reason is a good one, is not logically independent of the explanation 'I believe that tomorrow will be fine because I believe that there was a red sky this evening and also that if there is a red sky in the evening the following day will be fine.' Roughly, the explanation follows from the attempted justification by making the (explicit or implicit) parenthetical verbs descriptive and non-parenthetical. This view, unlike the other, makes it easy to see how our beliefs can originate from a consideration of the reasons that support them, e.g. the evidence for them. It is also compatible with the possibility that though somebody might believe something for a reason, so that his belief can be explained in the manner indicated, his belief nevertheless originated in a non-rational way. One of the confusions of the view under consideration is the idea that explanations are necessarily in terms of origins. But the question 'What led you here?' is not the same as the question 'What keeps you here?' You may have come to the meeting in the hope of hearing a good paper; you may remain out of politeness. Similarly, the question 'How did you first come to believe that  $p$ ?' is not the same as the question 'Why do you continue to believe that  $p$ ?' or 'Why do you now believe that  $p$ ?' I may have believed that the earth is round ever since I was six years old, and perhaps what made me believe it at first was that I was told it by a schoolteacher who, I later realized, was not a reliable source of information. Though I may never have ceased to believe it, what made me start to believe it may not be what makes me continue to believe it, for before I lost faith in my schoolteacher I may have become acquainted with the evidence, considered and rejected the arguments of the Flat Earth Society, etc. Thus if I am now asked 'Why do you believe that the earth is round?' and I give my reasons, I am also, by implication, giving a descriptive explanation of my belief, though its origins may have been quite different.

What I have argued shows that some familiar philosophical dichotomies, e.g. between reasons and causes, logic and psychology, etc., related as they are to a distinction between 'original existences' and what is 'representative', or between reality and language, are too crude because they neglect the complex position of the concept of belief, and also, perhaps, possible distinctions between logic and reason. What is believed, a proposition, has a logic; believing it is something psychological and has causes; but believing it is also what there can be reasons for, and a person's reasons for believing something connect closely with the causes of his belief.

## Reason and passion

Many of these considerations apply, with obvious modifications, to the notion of a reason for doing something. It follows that the question 'Can reason be practical?' has two senses: 'Can there be reasons for doing things?' and 'Can reason cause action?' We can deny that reason can cause action without committing ourselves, like Hume, to denying that there can be reasons for doing things. We cannot, of course, deny that there can be reasons for doing things without denying that reason can cause action; and perhaps it would be charitable to regard Hume's argument not as confusing these two matters but as passing legitimately, though not explicitly, from one to the other.

Whatever the cause, having concluded that reason cannot cause action he argues that a passion is necessary to motivate conduct. It is evident from what I have said that this cannot follow simply on the principle that causes and effects must be 'original existences' and cannot be propositions; for beliefs also are 'original existences', and on that principle alone would be as qualified as passions to cause action. Here too, then, Hume's assumption is that the proper contrast with actions in the practical-theoretical distinction is propositions; and passions, as 'original existences', connect with what is practical rather than with what is theoretical.

One of my aims is to show that the practical-theoretical distinction has been exaggerated by being represented as a distinction between actions and propositions, and that actions and beliefs present a less formidable contrast. I can further this aim, and strengthen the point that beliefs are 'original existences', by indicating briefly some of the extensive possibilities of connexions between passions and beliefs of all logical kinds, whether practical or not, i.e. between the passions and what is theoretical. Thus: as with doing something I can want to believe something, I can believe it passionately, I can feel inclined to believe it, I can believe it because I am angry, jealous, depressed or excited; like conduct, beliefs can be partial or impartial; and though fools may be different from knaves, it does not follow that a person may not, e.g. believe inconsistent things because he is selfish, vain, inconsiderate, cowardly, proud or kindhearted. It may, then, appear odd that the conflict between reason and passion has figured so much more prominently, and that the possible necessity of passions as causes has been considered so much more seriously, in the philosophy of practical matters than in the philosophy of theoretical matters. If there are grounds, as I think there are, for regarding the passions as more important in the practical than in the theoretical field, one of them at least is the opposite of what some philosophers

### *Practical reason*

seem to have thought; it is that to do something because one wants to is not to be the slave of passion but to do it of one's own free will, necessarily for some reason, and often for a good reason. This is certainly not true of believing something. But this is not because beliefs, being propositions, have their being exclusively in the operational area of the reason or intellect, and can be appraised and accounted for only in terms of logic, as true or false, consistent or inconsistent, etc.; a man's moods, feelings, attitudes, character and moral qualities can have their bearing on them.

### **Logical properties and rational principles**

I want now to consider whether the practical-theoretical contrast can be diminished from the other side: if beliefs can be appraised and accounted for in moral terms, like actions, can actions be appraised, like beliefs, in terms of logic? As Hume said, actions cannot be true or false, like propositions; but can they not, like beliefs and propositions, be consistent or inconsistent?

If  $p$  is true and the truth or probable truth of  $q$  follows from  $p$ , then the fact that  $p$  is a good reason for believing that  $q$ . This hypothetical indicates something of the relation between logic and reason: it shows how, to put the point figuratively, truths about logical properties are reflected normatively as requirements imposed upon us by reason. For the antecedent of the hypothetical is concerned entirely with logical matters, propositions and their properties, truth and implication; whereas the consequent is in some sense normative, a principle that can be conformed to or contravened by the psychological states of people, i.e. by their believing something. It is in this way that logical truths are also normative 'laws of thought'. And it is for this reason that some words designating the logical properties of propositions are also words of appraisal applicable to people and their psychological states: e.g. it is inconsistent to believe inconsistent things, and the person who believes inconsistent things can himself be appraised as inconsistent; and inconsistency is contrary to reason.

Principles of logic (and the range of the word 'principles' aptly bears this out) thus have a dual function, and the notion that, e.g. analytic principles are non-substantive can be misunderstood. As truths about the way things are they give us no information: they cannot be falsified, i.e. contravened. As norms about the way things ought to be they cannot be falsified either; but they can be contravened, by our beliefs, statements and arguments about the way things are. Though I cannot logically, I logically can, believe that  $p$  and that  $p$  implies  $q$  without also believing that  $q$ : this is not possible if



I am to be logical, but it is logically possible. And if it is psychologically impossible, this is not because the *modus ponens* principle is analytic but because its truth is obvious.

## Universality

However plain these things may seem when we are concentrating on theoretical matters, in the area of practical reason, such is the strength of our philosophical prejudices about the distinction between theory and practice, they are easily forgotten. This is evident from some familiar views about the status of what is generally regarded as the most important analytic principle in this area, the principle of universality. This principle may be formulated as follows: if a particular person ought to do a certain thing in a particular situation, he and anyone else in a situation of the same relevant kind ought to do the same kind of thing.

Some philosophers have questioned the importance of this principle on the ground that being analytic and logically necessary it cannot be an object-level principle about actions, a rule of conduct; it must be a second-level rule, e.g. about language. It is therefore formal and non-substantive, and thus not a practical principle; to be practical a principle must be substantive, capable of being conformed to or contravened by what people do. It is a familiar idea that analytic principles are not action-guiding.

Some odd suggestions are sometimes associated with this view, e.g. that since the principle of universality is a rule of language about the word 'ought', someone who appears to contravene the principle must be using the word 'ought' in an unusual way, with an unusual meaning. If this were the case, analytic principles would be non-substantive in the strong sense that they not only could not be falsified but also could not be contravened: no one could ever say or believe inconsistent things. It would be logically impossible, not simply illogical, to believe logically impossible things. This is one way of making people less illogical and irrational, but not, one feels, the most satisfactory way.

A related view removes the principle of universality equally far from the scene of the action: this is the view that the principle is 'morally neutral' and non-substantive in this way, that moral judgments, principles and codes must conform to the principle in order to be moral and not non-moral. In other words, universality is a necessary condition of something's being a judgment, principle or code of morality rather than of, say, etiquette. The idea here, therefore, is that the requirement of universality is implied by the word 'moral' as that word is applied not to conduct but to judgments,

principles and codes of conduct; it is thought to be this that distinguishes them from judgments, etc., of other logical types, i.e. from those that are non-moral. This last point, of course, does not follow. As contradictories, the terms 'moral' and 'non-moral' cannot be distinguished simply by a necessary condition for the application of one of them; sufficient conditions are also required. The fact is that universality is a requirement of judgments other than those of morality, e.g. of prudential judgments: in the principle as I originally stated it, the word 'ought' is not restricted to mean 'morally ought'. But this is not to agree that universality is a necessary condition of a judgement's being a moral judgment in such a way that lacking it the judgment must be of some other logical kind. Such an interpretation of the principle makes a mistake that is very relevant to present interests. Suppose I say of Smith that he ought to have done a certain thing, but of Jones, who was in the same circumstances, that he ought not to have done that thing. These two judgments contravene the principle of universality, and on the view we are considering it would therefore follow that not both can be moral judgments, but that one at least must be, e.g. a judgment of etiquette. This is enough to disqualify this account of the status of the principle. For my example is of a pair of judgments that indubitably can both be judgments of morality; though they cannot both be acceptable, since their contravention of an analytic principle (of universality) makes them inconsistent. One of them, it is true, might be not moral but immoral, e.g. in specifying something immoral as what ought to be done. Or it might perhaps be said to be not moral but immoral if accepted by somebody because of some moral defect, e.g. selfishness; and as I have pointed out, judgments of other logical kinds, e.g. mathematical, may be immoral in this latter way, though for obvious reasons judgments of morality are peculiarly liable to this kind of shortcoming. But this does not make them non-moral judgments. If the terms 'moral' and 'non-moral' are to be used in the descriptive classification of judgments according to their logical status, the criterion of what is moral must itself be morally neutral in this sense, that it must admit to this class all judgments that are in one way or another unacceptable judgments of that class. The principle of universality is not morally neutral in this way. It is not, that is, non-substantive in this way. Moral judgments, beliefs, principles and codes can contravene it.

It is not difficult to see how the view under criticism involves a confusion of the sort already outlined, by failing to distinguish the sorts of things that can and the sorts of things that cannot contravene an analytic principle, between the role of such a principle as a truth about logical properties and its role as a norm governing our beliefs,

judgments, principles and codes. If we say that our moral beliefs logically must conform to the principle of universality this is ambiguous. Properly understood, this is the normative form of the principle: it should mean that it is analytic that our moral beliefs *ought* to conform to the principle (if they are to be logically acceptable); not that it is analytic that they *are* universal (as *moral* beliefs). The non-normative truth that is logically necessary is not this latter, which is about judgments of what morally ought to be done, but one on a so-to-speak lower logical level, about what morally ought to be done: namely, that moral obligations, e.g., are universal, i.e. whatever our beliefs about them, something logically cannot be what morally ought to be done unless any other thing of the same relevant kind is also what morally ought to be done. It is, one might say, moral obligations that logically cannot contravene the principle of universality, not our beliefs about what are moral obligations; though these cannot either if they are to be logical, i.e. consistent.

### Can analytic reason be practical?

What then is the status of the principle of universality? I have argued that the view that it is non-substantive in the sense that it cannot be contravened by our moral beliefs, judgments, principles and codes is untenable. The question I want to raise now is whether it can be substantive in what might be thought to be a stronger sense, i.e. whether it can be contravened not only by beliefs but also by actions. If the principle is analytic, is it the case that analytic principles are non-substantive in the sense that they are not action-guiding? Can analytic reason be practical?

One thing to notice is that the principle is a principle of theoretical reason in a wider sense than the one already indicated: as with other matters we have considered, it does not discriminate between practical and theoretical matters. Once it is realised that the word 'ought' is not a peculiarly moral word, it is tempting to suppose that universality is a requirement of practical reason in general, moral and otherwise; and certainly it can be formulated as a principle about reasons for doing things. Thus: if the fact that *p* is a reason for doing some particular thing, any fact of the same relevant kind is equally a reason for doing the same kind of thing. Since a reason for doing something is necessarily a reason for believing that that thing ought to be done, or would be a good thing to do, it follows that the principle is theoretical in this sense, that it holds of reasons for believing that something ought to be done. But it is theoretical in a still wider sense; and indeed, it applies even more widely than this, wherever the notion of reason itself is applicable: for universality is a require-

ment of reason in general, not simply of practical reason. It could be said to hold in virtue of the meaning of the word 'reason'. Thus, if the fact that  $p$  is a reason for something, any fact of the same relevant kind is equally a reason for the same kind of thing. This is true, whether the reason is a reason for doing something, believing something, hoping, fearing or wanting something, or what not. In particular, when the reason is a reason for believing or thinking that  $q$ , the principle holds whatever the logical status of the proposition  $q$ , without discrimination. Represented in this way, the principle of universality is the requirement that every inference must have a principle.

It does not follow that the principle of universality is not closely connected with the meaning of the word 'ought'. For this word, like many others selected for special consideration by moral philosophers, is not only not peculiar to moral matters, it is not peculiar to practical matters in general. Consider this variant on an old joke: 'The regiment ought to move off at 8 p.m. The moon ought to rise at 9 p.m.' Though not without qualification, the word 'ought' signifies the pressure of reason in general, theoretical as well as practical.

A *prima facie* case for the contention that, though analytic, the principle of universality can be contravened by actions is this: actions can be consistent or inconsistent, and inconsistency is the contravention of an analytic principle. But it might be objected: this inconsistency cannot be of the same kind as inconsistency of beliefs. For though believing something cannot be true or false, what is believed can be: and it is because propositions can be inconsistent that beliefs can be inconsistent. It is this relationship of a belief to its object that makes inconsistency logically possible, i.e. it is this that makes it logically possible to believe what is logically impossible. Actions cannot have this kind of relation to propositions or to anything else: there is a difference between believing something and what is believed, but no comparable difference between doing something and what is done. It is not logically possible to do what is logically impossible, i.e. it is not logically possible for actions to be inconsistent. Thus, it might be claimed, though Hume's argument is faulty in detail, it can be modified to allow for believing and doing to represent the theoretical-practical distinction and still prove his point; for the possibility of rational appraisal of belief is derivative from the logical properties of what is believed, i.e. propositions. In Hume's language, believing is 'representative' in a way in which doing is not, and it is because of this that believing things is, and doing things is not, subject to rational appraisal as, e.g. consistent or inconsistent.

However, what Hume meant by 'representative' is not clear. He

held, e.g. that passions are like actions in being 'original existences' and not 'representative'; but passions are like beliefs in this respect, that as a distinction can be drawn between believing and what is believed, i.e. between a belief and its object, so also a distinction can be drawn between a passion and its object, e.g. between wanting something and what is wanted, between approval and what is approved of, between fear and what one is afraid of, between hope and what one hopes for. It may be that contrasting propositions with passions is as inept as contrasting propositions with actions. It may be less inept to contrast believing something with wanting or approving of something, and what is believed with what is wanted or approved of. Things approved of are not representative in the sense of being true or false, but logical properties are not confined to things that can be true or false. If arsenic is by definition a poison it would be inconsistent, but logically possible, to approve of giving a patient arsenic but not of giving him poison. In approving of one I am 'logically committed' to approving of the other, i.e. I ought in consistency, that is, to be logical, to approve of both or of neither.

But because no comparable distinction can be drawn between an action and its object, i.e. between doing something and what is done, actions clearly cannot be inconsistent in this way. And it might be thought that if we ask the question 'Of what sort must an "original existence" be for it to be a possible subject of logical appraisal?' the answer is 'The sort of thing that has an object in this sense, so that it can be logically possible to . . . what is logically impossible.' Thus it is logically possible, though inconsistent, to *approve* of giving a patient arsenic but not of giving him poison; and logically possible, though inconsistent, to *decide* to give him arsenic but not to give him poison; but it is clearly not logically possible to *give* him arsenic and not give him poison. However, this is logically impossible because such a thing would not only contravene the analytic principle that arsenic is poison, it would falsify it. The question is whether the principle of universality, though analytic, is a principle of a different sort, namely one that actions could contravene without falsifying. What is proved by the impossibility of giving a patient arsenic without giving him poison is that an action logically cannot be inconsistent with itself, as a belief can be inconsistent with itself. But when a person's belief is inconsistent with itself, or self-contradictory, the inconsistency in what is believed can always be analysed into a conjunction of two propositions, one inconsistent with the other; and this conjunction of two propositions can be represented as a temporal conjunction of two beliefs, i.e. as two beliefs held at the same time, one inconsistent with the other. Clearly, a person's actions cannot be inconsistent in exactly this way, since he

cannot do inconsistent things at one and the same time. But no such impossibility is required to contravene the principle of universality. This principle compares two different situations of the same relevant kind, and says that if a particular thing is what ought to be done in one, something of the same relevant kind is what ought to be done in the other. It is logically possible for someone to do different things on occasions of the same relevant kind, and this at least would not falsify the principle of universality.

## Notes

- 1 The ideas outlined in this paper have since been developed, and in some ways modified, in my book *Reason in Theory and Practice*, Hutchinson University Library, 1969. For instance, what in this paper I refer to as 'the complex position of the concept of belief' is far more fully explored in the book, and partly in consequence I there reject the view stated in the paper, that there can be non-theoretical reasons for believing things, i.e. reasons that do not bear on the truth of what is believed.

# Reason and desire

J. D. Mabbott

I PROPOSE to consider in this paper some points concerning the part played by reason in non-moral conduct. The place of reason in ethics is a separate issue with which I shall not be directly concerned.

'The thoughts are to the desires as scouts and spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things desired' (Hobbes). 'Reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions' (Hume). Here is the first activity of reason in conduct; it discovers means to the ends set by desire. On Hume's view reason alone can never be a motive to action; reason alone can never oppose a desire. Take Plato's example. I am thirsty and see some water. Something in me, however, says 'Don't drink it.' This, says Plato, must be reason. How might this occur? Reason might say, 'Higher upstream is a farm; the water is probably polluted.' Hume would maintain that reason is here pointing out that this water would be likely to cause me to have a stomach-ache. But the opposition to thirst is then provided wholly by my desire not to have a stomach-ache. Reason alone is powerless. We all know cases to confirm this. We say, 'Stop and think before you do that.' Our friend says, 'Well, what?' We reply, 'If you go ahead you will be unpopular.' He says, 'I know. What about it?' We recall Hippocleides in Herodotus, who stood on his head on a table at his engagement party. When his prospective father-in-law said, 'You have danced away your marriage,' he replied, 'Hippocleides doesn't care.'

But these examples reveal another activity of reason quite different from that of seeking means to ends already actively desired. Reason can show us that actions will lead to or deprive us of other ends which, when we notice them, we feel to be objects of aversion or desire. Now Hume himself admits the second type of rational activity:<sup>1</sup>

Reason can influence our conduct only after two ways: either when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it; or when it discovers the connection of causes and effects so as to afford us means of exerting any passion.

(Hume's picture) of a conflict of desires is like a boxing match in which both sides cannot win. What reason does here is to ensure that both sides do win.

We regard Köhler's apes as showing intelligence when they use jumping sticks or make piles of boxes on which to climb to reach their bananas. Should we not be even more astonished if we found evidence of an animal having two conflicting desires and arranging to satisfy both, one after the other? Should we not be more astonished still if we had reason to believe that the stronger desire had had its satisfaction postponed to that of the weaker? And should we not regard all that as evidence of a level of intelligence higher than anything Köhler's apes display? What is involved here is recognition of time. Any administrator or business man knows that the planning of time (his own time included) is one of the most important and rewarding uses to which he can put his intelligence. We have seen that this often means putting off a present desire with a promissory note. I know of no evidence that any animal is capable of this. Most children will not accept promissory notes. Many adults are noticeably weak in envisaging time-plans as solutions for their problems and conflicts, or in their power to devise such time-plans, or in their capacity to stick to them when they have been devised. And just so far as they fail in one or more of these three ways (and people who fail in one tend to fail in the others) they fall back into the Humean condition of satisfying the strongest desire of the moment and using reason only as its slave. And this is a frequent form of unintelligent and irrational action.

In the simple case I have considered, the two desires remain unaffected by the planning. I go to see my colleague and get the book. Meantime my hunger remains unabated (or increased) until in its turn it, too, is satisfied. But there are many ways in which planning results in altering the desires themselves, and the possibility of satisfying them. The desire whose satisfaction is postponed may diminish or disappear; and when this is known a time-plan may be used to weaken or destroy it. 'Count ten when you are angry.' Secondly, a time-plan can eliminate the actual occurrence of a desire by the paradoxical method of anticipating it. Civilized people in easy circumstances are seldom very hungry or thirsty; they do not eat and drink *because* they are hungry or thirsty but because their time-plan prescribes it. Their regular meals stave off these desires. Thirdly, a time-plan can check the operation of a desire by ensuring that, when the time comes for it to arise, it will not be possible or easy to satisfy it. If I want to reduce my smoking I put only a few cigarettes in my case before leaving home and keep none where I work; if I am suicidally inclined I give my gun to a friend to keep for



for its own sake, or in order to spend it on a rare postage-stamp. Neither desire is more rational than the other; neither more completely represents the whole self.

Why did Butler fail to see that the desire for pleasure or happiness is simply one particular desire among the others? I think, for two reasons. First, because he had said that all particular passions are desires for 'something external', and pleasures or happiness is not an 'external' object. But this was a mistake. There are hosts of particular desires which are not desires for external objects. Curiosity (whose object is knowledge—an internal state), the desire to dance, the desire for sleep, all these are obvious examples. Moreover, even when it is plausible to say the desire is one for an external object this is really misleading shorthand. When I am thirsty I do not desire *a* drink, I desire *to* drink. What would satisfy me is not an external object, water or beer, but to do something with an object. Thus the first reason why Butler may have concluded that the desire for pleasure is not a particular passion was the mistaken view that all particular passions are for external objects, whereas none is. The second reason why he refused to recognize a desire for pleasure may have been the psychological fact which is the basis of all the mistakes of hedonism or eudaemonism. Whenever I desire anything and achieve it, I achieve pleasure or happiness as well. The only way to get pleasure or happiness is to have other desires and have them satisfied. But it does not follow from this that the pursuit of pleasure or happiness has the status Butler attributes to self-love. Here is a mistake and a confusion. The mistake is to suppose that the pursuit of a desirable by-product of a desired end is something higher or more rational or more expressive of the whole self than the pursuit of the desired end itself. And the confusion is one between the desire for happiness and the achievement of happiness. It may be true that I achieve happiness if I have many desires and have all of them satisfied. But I can do this without desiring happiness. Indeed, if I desire happiness—if I enthrone the principle of self-love as Butler defines it—I shall almost certainly lose it. In the same way many of our particular desires have health as a by-product. 'A little of what you fancy does you good.' We pursue our meals, our walks and our games with no thought of health, yet health ensues. To enthrone the pursuit of health over all our lives is to lose health in hypochondria.

Butler's language occasionally hints at an alternative account of self-love. He sometimes substitutes 'good' or 'interest' for 'happiness' as its object. To say that a man is achieving what is his good or his interest may mean simply that he is getting most of what he wants. When 'interest' is used in the plural, this interpretation is even

more plausible. 'The very idea of interest or happiness consists in this, than an appetite or affection enjoys its object . . . The very idea of interest or happiness, other than the absence of pain, implies particular appetites or affections, these being necessary to constitute that interest or happiness . . . Men form a general notion of interest, some placing it in one thing, some in another.'<sup>5</sup> 'If we will act conformably to the economy of man's nature, reasonable self-love must govern.'<sup>6</sup> 'Our interest or good being constituted by nature, self-love only puts us upon obtaining and securing it.'<sup>7</sup> 'Human nature is . . . a composition of various parts, body, spirit, appetites, particular passions and affections; for each of which reasonable self-love would lead us to have due regard and make suitable provision.'<sup>8</sup>

These quotations, and particularly the last of them, suggest a different view of self-love. A man is under the influence of a particular desire; he wants *x*. He considers the results of getting *x* and observes that to achieve *x* may involve sacrificing *y* and *z* which he also wants. He observes that tomorrow or next year he will want *a* and *b* though he does not want them now. So far Humean reasoning would allow him to go. But he now goes on to consider how he is to get all these things or as many of them as possible. And much the most common answer is a time-plan. Notice that the making of such a time-plan does not involve the appearance of any new or ulterior object of desire—other than *x*, *y*, *z*, *a* and *b*—such as pleasure or happiness. It involves the organization of the particular desires *I* have or expect to have, and not the addition to them or the substitution for them of some quite different desire. And such organization, widened to include all actual or anticipated desires, would be (on this second or alternative view) the activity of self-love.

With this second interpretation Butler would indeed have been justified in regarding self-love as rational in a way in which the particular desires are not. He would have been entitled to give it a hierarchical position above the desires (since it orders and organizes them) but not I think a *morally* higher status. And obviously this interpretation justifies (as the pleasure-happiness interpretation could not) phrases like 'the whole self', 'on the whole', 'general' and indeed the very name 'self-love'. This interpretation also removes the paradox of self-love. 'If self-love wholly engrosses us and leaves room for no other principle there can be no such thing as happiness.'<sup>9</sup> It is very difficult to reconcile this with Butler's repeated assertion of the superiority of self-love to all other aims (conscience alone excepted, and conscience is not here involved). On the first interpretation the paradox is inevitable. 'If you would get happiness, forget it.' But on the second he could say, 'Forget about pleasure;

forget about happiness; go for what you want. But remember there are other things, too, worth having. See you do not miss them through lack of forethought and design.'

We can deal more briefly with Kant because the two alternatives are the same as in Butler and because the contradiction between them has already been brought out very clearly by Professor Paton.<sup>10</sup> (I should add here that Professor Paton is the only writer on moral psychology in whom I have found any recognition of the type of rational activity I am discussing in this paper. Cf. *The Good Will*, chs vii and viii.) In the *Critique of Practical Reason* we find 'a rational being's consciousness of the pleasantness of life uninterruptedly accompanying his whole existence is happiness, and the principle which makes this the supreme ground of determination of the will is the principle of self-love.'<sup>11</sup> Here again is the hedonist definition of self-love. But in Kant, as Professor Paton points out, there are even clearer traces of the alternative theory. 'All men have the strongest and most intimate inclination to happiness, because it is just in this idea that all inclinations are combined into one total.'<sup>12</sup> Kant refers also to 'man's wants and inclinations, the entire satisfaction of which he sums up under the name of happiness.'<sup>13</sup> Or again, 'In the precepts of prudence, the whole business of reason consists in uniting all the ends which are prescribed for us by our desires in the one single end, happiness', though Kant slips back into the utilitarian interpretation by adding to this sentence 'and in co-ordinating the means for attaining it.'<sup>14</sup>

We may here recall a similar transition in Mill who also held the first view as his main doctrine. 'By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain . . . pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends.'<sup>15</sup> But, later on, 'money is in many cases desired as an end in itself . . . Money is desired not for the sake of an end but as part of the end . . . The desire of it is not a different thing from the desire of happiness any more than the love of music or the desire of health. They are included in happiness . . . Happiness is not an abstract idea but a concrete whole, and these are some of its parts.'<sup>16</sup>

We began this enquiry with the example from Plato of the man who was thirsty yet rejected a drink. Plato's view that in this example the competing elements were desire and reason was contrasted with Hume's that the competitors are thirst and aversion from stomach-ache; and Hume's was agreed to be the more plausible description. But this verdict may now be reconsidered. The example we took was one where the water was foul and a danger to health. But should the desire for health be treated as ultimate? Hume gives an answer to this problem. 'Ask a man *why* he uses exercise; he will

answer, *because he desires to keep his health*. If you then enquire *why he desires health*, he will readily reply, *because sickness is painful*. If you push your enquiries further and desire a reason *why he hates pain*, it is impossible he should ever give any. This is an ultimate end.<sup>17</sup> Here is the answer we suggested; he rejects the drink because he wants to avoid a stomach-ache. But in the same passage Hume continues at once to give an alternative answer which opens the way to the true view. 'Perhaps to your second question, *why he desires health*, he may also reply that *it is necessary for the exercise of his calling*. If you ask *why he is anxious on that head*, he will answer, *because he desires to get money*. If you demand *why?* *It is an instrument of pleasure*, says he. And beyond this it is an absurdity to ask for a reason.' The implication is that pleasure or avoidance of pain are the ultimate ends discovered by such enquiries. But surely the real reason why we wish for health is not just that illness is painful, but that illness is 'incapacitating'. Health is necessary not only for 'the exercise of our calling' but for our hobbies, our social activities, our work for our friends and so on. Illness prevents us from getting and doing all the myriad things we want to get and to do. It makes planning impossible. And it is this rather than any particular pain or the loss of any particular pleasure which lies behind our desire for health. The activity of reason I have been discussing has escaped notice partly, I think, because our vocabulary includes no words appropriate in this connexion and partly because the activity is never pressed to those ideal limits which would make the use of a single word proper to describe it as a 'principle of action'.

Mill's change of mind is obviously an improvement and the recognition of plain fact, yet 'happiness' is quite an absurd name for the 'concrete whole' which he envisages, as G. E. Moore pointed out with great gusto.<sup>18</sup> 'Happiness' is certainly in English a name for a state of mind other than all the states of affairs normally desired as ends. It, like pleasure (if they can be distinguished), accompanies or follows the achievement of a desired end. There is no name for the 'concrete whole' which is the good for man. But this is because there is no such 'concrete whole'.

We certainly attempt to order and organize our desires, but 'self-love' would be a very misleading name for the tendency to do this. It borrows its normal force from the contrast with love of others. Yet, as Butler points out, love of others in its various forms covers a group of desires which are among those we have to order and harmonize. The same argument which makes Butler refuse to call desires 'selfish' or 'interested' should make us equally suspicious of calling this organizing tendency 'self-love'—though of course on the hedonist or happiness analysis 'self-love' would be less misleading.

But no name is needed. For no one ever attempts to reduce the whole of his life to a plan or to organize the satisfaction of all the desires he has or ever will have. We do attempt these harmonies over limited fields and short periods, and most commonly, perhaps, with only two or three desires. The most extended uses which we ever make of this tendency occur in choosing a career or in planning a holiday. In the latter case, we ask 'what are the various things I want to do?' and we try to fit them in or as many of them as possible. Some of them of course have to go to the wall; others emerge in a severely truncated form. Or again, if I ask myself where I should like to live when I retire, I have to consider what sorts of things I am likely to want or to want to do, and how best they, or some of them, can be fitted in. But if anyone asks me what is the tendency in me which thus tries to fit a number of different objectives into a single plan, 'self-love' seems an inadequate and misleading name, both because altruistic ends may be among those fitted in and because a holiday or even a career does not cover the whole of human life. 'Prudence' comes a little nearer the mark, but it, too, has a selfish ring. I think 'intelligent anticipation' is the common phrase most nearly appropriate, but the emphasis in it is on 'intelligent'.

(The distinction between the happiness analysis of self-love and that I have been suggesting has some relevance in connexion with the basic assumptions of economics. Economic theory had for long rested on a utilitarian basis of maximum happiness as the aim of a man so far as he was rational. There have recently been moves, of which Pareto was the forerunner, away from this utilitarian basis towards other criteria of rational decision.)<sup>19</sup>

In stating the aim of this paper I explicitly excluded moral action, but there is here an exact parallel to the use of reason which I have described. I have been considering so far conflicts of desire and noticing how the construction of time-plans can sometimes resolve them and can sometimes prevent them from arising. The parallel is with conflicts of duty. Those who complain of conflicts of duties are often people who have failed to devise a time-plan for their duties or have failed to carry it out when they have devised it. We often find ourselves in 'impossible situations' because we have put ourselves in them. One of our obligations is to think before acting. Two types of such thinking are parallel to the types Hume recognized in non-moral conduct. We have to think about means of carrying out our obligations, and we have to consider whether carrying out one obligation will result in shirking others. Moral philosophers tend to stop here, as Hume stopped, and to regard the resulting situation with its conflict of duties as a straight fight in which the stronger ('more stringent') duty should prevail. Yet surely here, too, there

is room for the type of thinking which tries to plan the organized and orderly achievement of our duties or as many of them as possible. They sometimes cannot be combined in a plan but this need not be taken as the normal or the only case; and frequently this special case occurs because of a failure yesterday or last week to plan so that they can be combined.

I have thought it worth while to describe this special function of reason in conduct because Hume's influence is strong today and his position very plausible. And it is also the case that the triumphs of science have tended to have the effect they had on Hume—to restrict the use of 'reason' to those types of reasoning found in mathematics (and logic) and natural science. And this, if it developed, would result in irrationalist views of conduct and ethics. In 'writing up' this activity of reason I may have given the impression that only by such attentive and continuous planning can anyone get along well in life. But there are three cautions to be observed here.

First, in non-moral action, planning can obviously be overdone. It may not allow for the unexpected. The man who solves his problems by time-plans is often the man who refuses to change them when new circumstances arise. Then again it is often advisable to leave some chance for gaining unplanned ends, and this the planner may tend to overlook. His nose is so deep in his map that he misses the kingfisher. Again, there must be a place for spontaneous creative activity, which is often wrongly and abusively called 'improvisation'. And planning of time, like planning of space or money or energy, itself consumes time (and space or money or energy), and may leave too little of these commodities for the activities planned. The too-rational man then becomes a Hamlet, whose

but to the over-development of some particular passion. Yet the man who carefully plans how to get most effectively all the things he wants may present just as unadmirable a character.

The third caution is a stronger form of the second. There are theories which try to find in the ideal of a unified or harmonious self in which all compatible desires (including of course the social or altruistic ones) are satisfied in due proportion a definition of the moral standard. Plato is not free from this. Butler, in his watch simile, comes near it. T. H. Green's self-realization theory implies it, and, though carefully qualified, it remains a dominating factor in Professor Paton's coherence theory of the good will. But just as the raw material of non-moral planning is the desires, so the morality of actions lies in the ends pursued and the motives from which they are pursued and coherence or organization has here, too, only a conditional or dependent place.

Much of this paper seems to me obvious, not to say platitudinous. But the obvious is sometimes overlooked in the pursuit of one-sided theories or through the adoption of unduly limited views of the nature and powers of 'reason' or 'intelligence'.

A last word. I have been writing throughout of 'reason' doing this and 'desire' doing that, of desires conflicting and of reason organizing them. It is clear that such language is dangerous and I have used it only because the authorities I wanted to discuss have used it and because its use greatly reduces the length of the sentences we frame. I am sure that it would be safer and more accurate to eliminate these 'faculty' words, if strict accuracy was required. Instead of saying, 'Thirst is a desire not for an external object, water, but for an activity, drinking' I should say, 'When a man is thirsty he would not be satisfied by being given water but only by being allowed to drink it.' Or again, when I say, 'Reason arranges to satisfy both desires by means of a time-plan' I should say, 'A man can properly be said to be acting intelligently when he arranges to achieve at two different times two activities both of which he desires to achieve and which he cannot achieve simultaneously.' The whole of the paper could be rewritten in these terms, avoiding the nouns 'reason', 'desire', etc., altogether, without any change or loss of meaning. It would be twice as long; it would be distressingly pedantic to read; and, unless all the Butler, Hume, Kant and Mill passages were rewritten in this sterilized language too, the connexion between their views and those I have been presenting would be lost.

Notes

- 1 *Treatise of Human Nature*, III, i, Edition Selby-Bigge, 1896, p. 459.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 462.
- 3 Sermon XI, Selby-Bigge, *British Moralists*, vol. I, para. 228.
- 4 Sermon I, Selby-Bigge, para. 205.
- 5 Preface to Sermons, Selby-Bigge, vol. I, para. 199.
- 6 Sermon II, para. 217.
- 7 Sermon XI, para. 231.
- 8 Sermon XII, para. 241.
- 9 Sermon XI, para. 231.
- 10 *The Categorical Imperative*, pp. 83-7.
- 11 Trans. Abbott, *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, p. 108.
- 12 *Grundlegung*, trans. Abbott, op. cit., p. 15.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 14 *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed., p. 828; trans. Kemp-Smith, p. 632.
- 15 *Utilitarianism*, Everyman ed., p. 6.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.
- 17 *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, appendix I, ed. Selby-Bigge, 1902, para. 244, p. 293.
- 18 *Principia Ethica*, pp. 71-2.
- 19 Cf. I. M. D. Little, *A Critique of Welfare Economics*, O.U.P., 1950, ch. 1-3.



## Introduction

THE traditional problem of the freedom of the will is about whether men are ever responsible for the things they do, in the sense that they are subject to praise and blame for some of their actions. Quite clearly, in some cases they are not; and we think they are not because of the kind of explanations we are able to give for their actions. On the other hand, in those cases where men are regarded as responsible for what they do, their acts are hardly thought of as inexplicable: rather, where men are responsible their acts can be explained, but by a different kind of explanation from those appropriate when they are not responsible. The problem is that we find it difficult to say precisely which kind of explanations rule out, and which allow, responsibility, and why. As a result of this, doubt can arise as to whether we are ever responsible for *any* of our acts. This doubt may arise in two ways, requiring two different sorts of answer. *First*, it may be thought that those kinds of explanation of human actions which, when they apply, appear to rule out responsibility, always apply. *Secondly*, it may be thought that those explanations of human action which do apply in those cases in which we attribute responsibility turn out, on closer inspection, and paradoxically, to rule out responsibility.

The first kind of doubt might arise as follows. A motorist is accused of driving at sixty miles an hour in the wrong direction up a one-way street. He defends himself by saying that he was descending a steep hill, his brakes failed and his steering links sheered, so that he was helpless. The explanation of his unfortunate progress down the hill is now one which would equally well do for an empty car or a boulder: an explanation entirely in physical terms. In such a case we would absolve him from any responsibility (unless he could be said to be responsible for something quite different, such as the unroadworthy condition of the car). Such explanations are universally accepted as ruling out responsibility. But is it not possible that every event which occurs in the world, including those events

responsibility. To give a positive account will be to examine what sorts of explanation of behaviour do lead to the attribution of responsibility. But the second kind of doubt suggests that the kind of explanations *ordinarily* taken to allow responsibility, in fact—once we examine the matter more closely—rule it out: and that if responsibility is possible at all, it must be because of the satisfaction of rather extraordinary conditions which it might take a metaphysician to descry.

We tend to ascribe responsibility when what a man does is explained by his wants or desires. But, at any given time of action, a man is not responsible for having the wants or desires which lead to his actions. How then can he be responsible for doing what arises from them? Even if we say that a man was at some time past responsible for his later becoming the kind of man he now is, we do not escape the problem. For if what he did in the past was an outcome of his *then* wants or desires, he was no more responsible for what he did then than for what he does now.

Stated baldly in this way, in the face of contemporary sophistication the problem is not likely to impress. Talk of 'wants and desires' covers a multitude not only of sins but virtues; careful and painstaking discrimination is likely to reduce the problem to more manageable proportions, if it does not dissolve it altogether. But we are looking for some general characterization of responsibility, and it is not self-evident, though perhaps it is all too often an article of faith, that the philosopher's task of trying to provide such illuminating general characterizations is replaceable without loss by a merely piecemeal approach. The attempt will be made in this paper to provide such a general account in terms of a notion of 'assessable' reasons, more precisely characterized than 'wants and desires', but not unconnected with the notion of wanting. But it is surely right to start from explanations in terms of wants, if only because some of the most influential attempts to attack this problem in the past have done so. I shall mention two.

The first is that of Thomas Hobbes. For him, men's actions are caused by their desires ('endeavours towards and fromwards'), and to talk of 'free will' over and above the operation of these desires is to talk nonsense. The second is that of Kant, for whom, if actions are the outcome of desire, they are 'determined', not 'free'. Hobbes's and Kant's conclusions about responsibility are opposite and have opposite faults. For Hobbes, a man is 'free' and responsible when his action arises from his desires and not from a cause external to him. For Kant, a man is free and responsible only when his action arises neither from external causes nor from his desires, but from a mysterious act of will which Kant has to go into the noumenal

talk about what there are good or bad reasons for doing is empty, pointless and useless. For if the reasons which explain human action are utterly different from those which justify it, then only inexplicable human actions are ever justified. Talk of justificatory reasons can have no effect on human behaviour.

If positive conditions in which a man can be regarded as responsible for his actions are to be set out in terms of 'justificatory' reasons, then it is obvious that these reasons must be in some way explanatory as well. We must also avoid a trap which this kind of approach sets for us, and into which Kant has been accused of falling: the trap of thinking that only *right* acts are those for which we are responsible; for if we say that acts for which we are responsible are those for which we have justificatory reasons, then it will appear that we are responsible only when we are justified.

I shall now try to give a general account which satisfies the aim without falling into the trap. I shall try to set out the conditions in which a man may be held responsible for his actions in terms of reasons which are genuinely explanatory. I shall call these 'assessable reasons'; the term 'assessable' points to the fact that justification is relevant to them: they can be spoken of as good; but it does not imply that they always justify, because they can be spoken of as bad as well.

First, I shall try to set out what assessable reasons are. Then I shall discuss the issue in terms of them, rather than in terms of wants or desires. Finally, in my conclusion, I shall briefly adumbrate a positive general account of the conditions of responsibility, and indicate that this account enables us to understand certain matters which would otherwise remain puzzling.

## Assessable reasons

### *Assessable reasons are beliefs*

Whenever someone is responsible for what he does, his action must be explainable, or at least in part explainable, by reference to what he believed (or, of course, what he knew: it will not affect the present argument to treat knowledge as a sub-class of belief). This rules out, straight away, explanations purely in terms of what Hobbes would call external causes or impediments, such as being pushed, or carried down a hill in a car.

No one would deny that in many cases the agent's belief is important in the explanation of an act for which he is responsible. A man kills another because he believes he is his wife's seducer, and he would not if he did not. I drink the poison because I think it is an elixir, and I would not if I did not. The hangman executes the

murderer because he believes it to be his civic duty, and he would not if he did not. But there are cases which suggest that the agent's beliefs need play no part in the explanation of his action; yet the agent is responsible for doing what he does.

For example, a man in the middle of a street conversation turns aside and spits in the gutter. Asked why he did it he says, 'No particular reason: I just did.' What belief explains his action? He surely might be regarded as responsible for what he did, for example if the act were ill-mannered.

It is difficult to point to any belief on the part of the agent which might explain his action. Indeed, if it is true that what he did was done for no reason at all, it cannot have been done for a reason constituted by one of his beliefs.

I will argue that this case constitutes no exception to the principle that whenever someone does something for which he is responsible, his action must be explainable, or at least in part explainable, by reference to what he believes. I shall argue further that whenever someone does something for which he is responsible, there must be some sense in which he had a reason for doing what he did.

To be responsible for what one does one must surely be aware of doing the action under some description (though not necessarily the description which inculpates). Thus, for example, it is surely a defence against having shot someone that one was not aware that the gun was loaded; or, at least, if it is still averred that one ought to be more careful in handling firearms, that one simply did not know the object one was handling was a gun. Furthermore, one must not only be aware of doing the action under some description; but there must be some description of the action under which one is aware of doing it, *in virtue of which* it is done. If what a man thinks makes no difference to what he does, then his awareness of his behaviour no more suggests that he is responsible for it than his awareness that he is uncontrollably shivering with cold makes him responsible for doing so. If the ways in which he would characterize his action had nothing to do with whether he was to perform it or not, then it seems to be not so much his doing anything as having something happen to him.

If this is so, then any action for which an agent is responsible must be explainable in terms of some belief; for every characterization of an action involves a belief, and action for which an agent is responsible is one which is done in virtue of the fact that the agent would characterize it in one way rather than another.

Let us then look again at the case of the man who turns and spits in the middle of a conversation. Now there are many ways of characterizing this action, some of which the agent may be able to

give. He is wetting the ground, annoying his companion, committing a breach of manners, clearing his throat, making an irritating noise—and spitting. He might give any one of these beliefs about the action as his reason for doing it—he might say he did it to wet the ground or annoy his companion. But our case is where he says he did it for no reason. 'I just spat.' But even here he must surely have been aware that what he was doing constituted spitting, and it was because of *this*—not because of all the other things it constituted—that he did it.

A desire to resist this view of the matter may arise because it is difficult to see how else he could have seen what he did: that what he did was spitting is something he could not possibly be mistaken about, at least not in any but the most extraordinary circumstances. It is indeed because this is so that we would not normally see fit to mention that for him spitting is, in fact, spitting. But that does not mean it is not true. Other cases where someone honestly says he did something for no particular reason will allow that in his characterization of the act the agent might have been, or indeed actually was, mistaken in the belief in terms of which he would characterize his action and in virtue of which it was done. For example, one runs into the Chancellor of the Exchequer and hears him mutter

‘Iminy, Biminy, Piminy, Proop,  
Let the Prime Minister stagger and droop.’

Asked why he is casting a spell on the Prime Minister he replies, ‘Oh, no particular reason: I just thought I would.’ His belief—that in saying this he would be casting a spell—is what explains his saying what he says. But his belief is in this case undoubtedly a false one.

Why, then, do we say that in these cases the action is done ‘for no reason at all’ or ‘for no particular reason’? These cases are ones where the action is mentioned in terms of the description which mentions that aspect of the act in virtue of which it was done. We would appear to mean, then, in saying that the agent did what he did for no particular reason, that there is no *further* description of the action which the agent would give, in virtue of which it was done; that is, that the agent has no *further* belief about the nature of what he was doing which explains why he did it.

#### *Assessable reasons explain*

Assessable reasons are beliefs which explain actions, but they need not furnish complete, or full, explanations. Mentioning a belief in explanation of an action may lead only to a demand for further explanation. For example, a man plants a bomb in the throne-room

because he believes doing so will kill off the King. We may still want to ask why this belief, shared probably by so many others, should stir him into action. The answer might be in terms of other beliefs; for example, that he believes that if the monarch is killed, his successor will reduce taxes. Or it might be in terms of something quite different: not beliefs at all, but something possibly not accessible to the agent. We might tell a Freudian story about the man's unconscious wishes: he is Oedipal and unconsciously identifies the monarch with his father.

Indeed, one can allow that there is no belief which cannot ultimately be explained by some factors other than beliefs, factors of which the agent is unaware and which are not in his control.

*Assessable reasons are characterizable as bad*

Reasons which explain actions, which are not beliefs, and those beliefs which explain actions but are yet not assessable reasons, may be characterizable as *good*. Thus, for example, we might say, 'There is a very good reason why he vomited: he had swallowed copper sulphate' (here giving a reason which has nothing to do with the agent's beliefs). We might say, 'There is a very good reason why he couldn't help his knees knocking: he believed he was about to be shot' (here giving a reason which is in terms of a belief, but for an action for which we would not ascribe responsibility). However, while each of these reasons could be described as good, they could never be described as *bad* reasons for what they explain. It would make no sense. To say these are good reasons is to say they supply effective explanations. But an ineffective explanation is not so much a bad explanation as no explanation at all.

Assessable reasons are those which, while explanations, can meaningfully, though not always truly, be characterized as bad. For example, if a man shot his neighbour because he believed his neighbour seduced his wife, his belief, *that his neighbour seduced his wife*, explains what he did; but (most would say, but even if it is not true, it makes sense to say) *that his neighbour seduced his wife* is a bad reason for shooting him. Assessable reasons may also be characterized as 'good'; or even 'no reason at all', if bad enough.

Notice that it is *his believing* that his neighbour seduced his wife which explains what he does. It is not this, *his believing*, which is however being characterized as bad: it could be bad that someone believes something, for example if this shows he is mentally corrupt or illogical; but in the case we are considering the belief may be a perfectly reasonable one. What is being characterized as bad is not the believing, but the content of the belief.

This distinction can be made in everyday language, though circumlocutiously. That his neighbour seduced his wife is the reason *why* he shot his neighbour; it is not a good reason *for* shooting his neighbour. It is *his* reason for shooting; but it is not *a* reason, or at least not *a good* reason for shooting. The notion of an assessable reason sums all this up. *That his neighbour seduced his wife* explains what he did, in virtue of his believing it; it is a good or bad reason, in virtue of *what* it is that he believes. This enables us to see how certain reasons we give for action are at once explanations and justifications (or condemnations).

*Assessable reasons are connected with wants*

In many cases we can state the same explanation of some action indifferently in terms either of the agent's assessable reasons or in terms of his wants: thus, for example, 'His reason for taking the quinine was that it would cure his malaria' seems to say much the same as 'He took the quinine because he wanted to cure his malaria.'

But this is not always so. To say 'His reason for not taking the car to work yesterday was that it was Friday' leads to no obvious explanation in terms of wants (e.g. that he wanted to avoid Friday's heavy traffic, or that he wanted his wife to be able to use the car for her Friday shopping, or that he didn't want to transgress some proscription of the Muslim faith). Worse, we may say 'His reason for wearing fur boots was that he was going out in the snow; but he didn't *want* to go out in the snow. He would have preferred to stay by the fire, but he had to see to the sheep.'

In the first case, the agent's merely thinking that quinine cures malaria would not lead him to take quinine unless he wanted to cure malaria. In the second, the agent's thinking it was a Friday would not lead to any particular behaviour unless the fact that it was a Friday led him to want certain things. In the third, his belief that if he went out he would meet snow, far from leading him to go out, would normally keep him in; but there was something else he wanted to which going out in the snow was a means: he wanted to see to the sheep.

What, then is the connexion between wanting and having an assessable reason? The cases just mentioned suggest that there are three possibilities, at least so far as we are considering actions for which one is responsible:

1. Explanations of human actions in terms of beliefs always need to be supplemented by *further* explanation in terms of wants. The full explanation will require reference to two *distinct* factors: the

belief which constituted the agent's assessable reasons, and the agent's wants.

2. Some actions cannot be explained in terms of the agent's wants, which will be done *despite*, not *because of*, what he wants.

3. The agent's assessable reasons and his wants are not *distinct* factors, but are logically or conceptually connected. The fullest possible explanation in terms of assessable reasons requires no *further* explanation in terms of wants, though it will always imply an explanation in terms of wants. While it is possible for someone to do something *despite*, not *because of*, some of his wants, this will be only because he has *other wants*.

I shall argue that the third possibility is correct. If so, we can avoid mentioning wanting in stating conditions of responsibility, and set them out entirely in terms of assessable reasons.

The first and second possibilities set out above agree in regarding wants as distinct from having assessable reasons. They disagree, in that according to the first possibility all action requires explanations in terms of wants, while according to the second, not all action can be so explained. I shall argue that what these two views have in common, that wanting and having assessable reasons are distinct, is a consequence of a mistaken view of the nature of wanting; and that it is this which leads to the mistaken denial of the universal role of wants in explaining action in the second case (2).

Wanting something often involves hankerings, cravings, strong feelings of desire and, when these wants are frustrated, slight or even strong feelings of distress. Our sighs and cries, moans and groans, yippees and hurrahs are evidence of the urgency of our wanting or not wanting. A world of churning internal commotions is associated with our wants, and this world seems to have a lot to do with the way we behave. This may lead us to think that such internal commotions are what constitute wants, and what determines action; so that beliefs are inert factors or catalysts and that all the motive work is done by the internally felt passions.

But such a conclusion is hardly plausible, and our disinclination to accept that we are driven into all our acts by internal commotions is what leads to the second view (2). Surely, sometimes, we do something not because we want to—indeed, when we do not want to—but because we think we ought to: it is right, our duty. Thinking we ought to may be a calm intellectual conviction, quite different from a hankering or a passion. It is something quite cool, and can be opposed to all those churning emotions which would lead us away from it.

One might answer to this: yes, but if someone does something not because he wants to, but because he ought to, he surely must want to



surely it must be true that one wants to avoid losing one's job. Thus, while part of the beliefs which supply assessable reasons may be counter to some of one's wants, it would appear that the final explanation of what one does in terms of one's beliefs, which supplies an assessable reason not backed by any further reason, must correspond to a want. But what justifies this 'must'? It is not, surely, that we have observed that, where such beliefs lead to actions, there is in fact an invariably concomitant and separably discriminable state of wanting. The connexion must be conceptual, not empirical; between the very notions of a reason for acting and a want, not between the observable facts.

It is not that, in the case of a belief which is a final assessable reason, there is *in addition* a want; it is rather that there being a final assessable reason *constitutes* a want. A final assessable reason mentions a belief which explains an action, where no further belief can be cited in explanation. The want is constituted, not, of course, just by the belief, but by the fact that the belief does finally explain the action. Of course, in the absence of the want, the belief appears inert; but that is just because to attribute the want is to say no more than that the belief is not inert.

Certain beliefs explain our actions; but this is not *because* we have certain wants: it is what it is to have certain wants.

If this is correct, then explanations of actions in terms of wants can always be replaced by explanations in terms of assessable reasons. This is not of course to say that *all* talk of wanting can be so replaced: we talk of wants to explain not only actions but internal commotions, happiness and misery, or in describing someone's character. But talk of wants can be replaced by talk of assessable reasons when we are trying to set out conditions of responsibility.

### **Assessable reasons and responsibility**

I have so far tried to set out an account of assessable reasons as follows: they are beliefs which explain actions, though not necessarily fully, which it makes sense to characterize as bad, and which are conceptually connected with the agent's wants. The latter connexion is so close that it should be possible to set out an account of the conditions of responsibility in terms of assessable reasons without the need for further reference to wants. *This I shall now attempt to do.* If an agent is responsible for doing something, then he must have an assessable reason for doing it. But this is not sufficient for his being responsible for doing what he does: something more is required.

There will be many cases where someone's action is explainable by

an assessable reason where we would not ascribe responsibility. For example, an alcoholic in the middle of a roaring bender hears that next morning he is to be carpeted by his employer for his drunken record, with the likelihood that unless he can show good evidence that his habits will change he will lose his job and ruin himself and his family. There is barely time for him to sober up before the interview. He immediately reaches for another drink. Why swallow more gin instead of a cup of strong black coffee? Because gin is alcoholic and coffee not (otherwise he might equally well have reached for coffee). That the gin contains alcohol is his reason for doing what he does; and, in his case, that a drink contains alcohol is not a much better reason for drinking it than that it contains strychnine. But the poor fellow can't help it. He couldn't have done otherwise: he is so gripped by his addiction that nothing, not even the thought of his own ruin, could make him act otherwise. Again, a man is suddenly faced by the murderer of one of his children. Possessed by rage he strangles him. Could a man, or at any rate this man, faced with such provocation, help doing otherwise? Whether or not he could, his reason, that his victim murdered his child, is a reason which cries out for assessment.

Most of these cases will be the ones we tend to refer to in terms of irresistible cravings, overmastering obsessions or overpowering desires. They are cases in which the agent's actions are determined by certain of his beliefs (there is gin in the glass; that is my child's murderer) which can be assessed as good or bad reasons; but, having such beliefs, he cannot help doing what he does.

A traditional way of accounting for such cases, and incidentally proposing certain conditions of responsibility, would be this: he cannot be blamed in these cases because he is unable to determine which of his beliefs lead to action. Only where he acts on beliefs which he could have chosen not to act on is he subject to praise or blame. Only when he can interpose his will between his beliefs and his actions, and say yea or nay to what his beliefs would lead him to do, can he be responsible. But, putting all a man's beliefs to one side, what can be regarded as determining the will which decides on which beliefs one will act? The only possible answer is 'nothing', in which case the acts for which we are responsible are inexplicable.

There is, however, another possibility—though one which we must ultimately reject. Some of our beliefs will concern the assessments of our assessable reasons: that this or that assessable reason is a good or bad one. Now, a man's actions may sometimes be explained in terms of such beliefs. He may stop to consider what to do, and do only that which he believes there is a good reason for doing. Could

we say that a man is to be regarded as responsible for what he does only if his action is to be explained by his belief that some of his other beliefs constitute good reasons for doing what he did? This echoes Kant's view that free action is that which is done out of respect for the law—the law in this case being that which determines whether any reason is a *morally* good one. The difficulty with this account is that it appears to restrict action for which we can be held responsible to conscientious action: that is, when our acts are explained by beliefs other than that a reason for acting is a good one, we are not responsible; we are responsible only where our action can be explained by our belief that there was a good reason for doing what we did. This is certainly not how we would normally regard the matter: we often regard people as responsible and blame them precisely because they did something which they knew there was no good reason for doing and every good reason not to do. A further difficulty would be that we could never hold anyone responsible for doing something unless he has considered his reasons for what he was going to do: so that a man who drives dangerously fast just in order not to keep his girl-friend waiting could plead that he should not be blamed since he had never bothered to ask himself whether or not his reason for driving so fast was a good one.

What is it that leads us to say that the alcoholic, or the man subjected to great provocation, are not responsible for what they do? It is certainly true that, if we are to say this, then whether they think their reasons are good or bad will make no difference to what they do. This does not mean, however, that if they think their reasons are good, then they are responsible. Indeed most alcoholics seem to believe most of the time that they have good reasons for taking another drink—that it will help them to face the day, that they will be better company for it, that it will ward off a cold—but the trouble is that they will still drink if we convince them otherwise. The fact that the alcoholic is not responsible for his drinking seems to depend not so much on whether his beliefs about whether his reasons are good or bad make any difference to what he would do, but on whether *any* of his beliefs could make a difference. These may or may not include beliefs about whether his reasons for doing so are good or bad. If a heavy drinker acquires a belief that his reasons for drinking are bad ones, and this stops him, then of course he is responsible for what he does. If he acquires such a belief and it does not stop him, he may or may not be responsible for what he does. If he acquires the belief that alcohol is rather too expensive, and this stops him, it shows that he is responsible for what he does, and no helpless alcoholic, even if he thinks that drinking costs rather a lot is a bad reason for not drinking.

## Conclusion

We can now suggest the following positive account of the conditions in which someone may be regarded as responsible for doing what he does. He is responsible only if there is an assessable reason for his doing what he did. More is required, however. It must also be true that, had some of his other beliefs been different from what they were, he would have done otherwise. If, whatever else he might have believed, he would not have acted otherwise, he is not responsible for doing what he did.

This account of the conditions of responsibility is more satisfying than many others, for it explains what on some other accounts seems puzzling. I shall end by pointing out three ways in which this is so.

First, many accounts of freedom of the will present us with an either/or situation. Either a man acts freely, or he does not; either he is responsible for doing what he does, or he is not; either he is subject to praise and blame, or he is not. But in fact there are far too many situations which cannot be accommodated within this rigid dichotomy. We have to account for diminished responsibility and to attribute degrees of responsibility.

Our account does allow this. Take our unfortunate alcoholic again. For most alcoholics, it becomes progressively more difficult to resist drink, so that many do not recognize their predicament, if at all, until it is too late. This progress of the disease can be represented as one in which a man's beliefs become less and less effective in deterring him from drinking. In the early stages, the thought of a hangover is not enough to stop him drinking too much, though the thought of public disgrace would. Later, having accepted disgrace and ruin, even the thought of criminal penalties, or that his acts involve theft, no longer affects him. Finally, even the imminence of his own death from cirrhosis is not enough, though perhaps he would still refrain from drinking so long as he is immediately threatened with a loaded gun or torture. These are all stages in the strengthening of a hideous addiction; and if addiction is able to excuse, then the strength of the excuse is surely dependent on the strength of the addiction.

We can then say: a man is responsible to the *degree* to which, if his other beliefs were different, what was in fact his assessable reason would not have led to his doing what he did.

Secondly, we can distinguish between being responsible for doing what one does and being a responsible person. When we are responsible for doing what we do we are subject to praise or blame. But a responsible person is not someone who is in some sense more subject to praise and blame than others; in fact he is more subject to praise and less subject to blame. Why is this? I would suggest that a

responsible person is someone who would not only have done otherwise if some of his beliefs had been different, but who would have done otherwise if he had believed that what was his assessable reason was not a good one. He must have a capacity both for assessing assessable reasons and for being moved by that assessment. This account of what it is to be a responsible person is rather like some mistaken accounts we have discussed of what it is to be responsible for doing something. But the two cannot be the same. One cannot escape being responsible for what one does merely by being irresponsible.

Finally, this account allows an answer to the problem with which we began: how can the conditions which explain human action be connected with what justifies (or condemns) them? Actions are explained by assessable reasons. These are beliefs, and what explains the action is that the agent has certain beliefs, while what justified or condemns it is the content of the belief which explains. How an agent is affected by a whole corpus of possible beliefs cannot be something he is responsible for, since there are no further beliefs which can lead to his being so affected. But to be responsible is not to be responsible for the whole corpus of beliefs which affect action; it is to have beliefs which lead one to act in ways which one would not if one's actual beliefs were different.

This brings us to a position nearer to that of Hobbes than that of Kant. Hobbes, regarding 'the last desire preceding the action' as that which determines it, treats a man as responsible so long as an act arises out of such a desire. The picture is a mechanical one: an internal lever causes an external movement, and so long as the lever is internal the machine acts freely. But the model should be that of an organism rather than a machine. It is the whole organic system of beliefs or wants which must be appealed to in deciding whether someone is responsible for what he does, not a single belief or desire. If we realize this we will be less inclined to the opposite extreme, of thinking that one is responsible only when the Hobbesian machine is operated by a ghost, whose own operations are inexplicable.

THERE are various familiar expressions which suggest that believing has some characteristics in common with action. This has led certain philosophers to maintain that belief is something voluntary, and they have spoken of 'the will to believe'. Indeed, we all agree with these philosophers up to a point. We all agree that there is such a thing as 'wishful thinking'; and the sort of thinking here referred to is believing, or at any rate half-believing. Again, when we are confronted by some doubtful and complex question, one person may sum up his conclusion about it by saying 'I believe that  $p$ ' and another may say 'I prefer to believe that  $q$ '. In such a case we should all admit that a man can properly be said to choose which of several alternative answers he will believe.

Some philosophers, however, have gone further. They have not only maintained that believing, or some believing, is voluntary. They have also maintained that belief is at least sometimes a matter of moral obligation; that there are circumstances in which a man *ought* to believe a proposition  $p$  or disbelieve a proposition  $q$ . Here they are not using the word 'ought' in what might be called its intellectually-normative sense, a mild and harmless sense which would worry nobody. They do not just mean that it would be reasonable for Mr A to believe the proposition  $p$ , given the evidence which he has. They mean that he is morally obliged to believe it, that he will be morally blameworthy if he fails to believe it, and still more so if he disbelieves it. As we shall see later, they even think that in some circumstances a man is morally obliged to believe a proposition  $p$  even though the evidence which he has may be unfavourable to it; or that he is morally obliged to go on believing it as firmly as before even when the evidence for the proposition is weakened, or the evidence against it is strengthened, as a result of some new piece of information he has acquired. These doctrines about a duty to believe are strange and even alarming. But there are certain common ways of speaking and thinking about belief which lead very naturally in that direction. Perhaps it may be of some interest to consider them and to ask what their implications are. As I

If it is reasonable for me to believe  $p$ , then  $p$  must be consistent with all the other propositions I believe. And further, the evidence which I have must be on balance favourable to  $p$ .

Let us first consider the consistency criterion. Obviously, the fact that  $p$  is inconsistent with some other proposition  $q$  which I believe is not by itself a sufficient ground to justify me in saying 'I cannot believe  $p$ .' It will justify me in saying only 'I cannot both believe  $p$  and believe  $q$ .' It might be, then, that the reasonable course is to reject  $q$  and accept  $p$ , or again to suspend judgment about both.

But what if the proposition  $p$  is *internally* inconsistent? Surely in this case, at any rate, the consistency criterion will be enough by itself to justify me in saying, 'I cannot believe that.' Suppose a fisherman tells me that he caught a warm-blooded fish in the River Cherwell today. Surely I am justified in saying, 'I simply cannot believe it.'

Nevertheless, it is logically possible that the man did catch a creature which looked like a fish, lived in water, had scales and fins and yet was warm-blooded; and that the only way he could think of for describing it was this *paradoxical*, i.e. logically-inconsistent, expression 'a warm-blooded fish'. He would have been wiser, perhaps, to make the inconsistency perfectly plain and obvious. He should have followed the example of Professor Wisdom's man who was asked whether it was raining and replied, 'It is and it isn't.' He should have said, 'What I caught was a fish and yet it was not.' But then, surely, I should have been all the more justified in saying, 'I cannot believe it.' Well, if the inconsistency of his statement was my sole justification for saying so, my inability to believe him would no doubt have been reasonable, but it would also have been imperceptive. I should be showing an insensitiveness to the limitations and imperfections of language.

What I ought to say is, 'What do you mean?' or 'How do you mean?' Perhaps he will then explain that the creature had some or many of the characteristics of a fish, but was also warm-blooded. When he has given his explanation I shall still say, 'I cannot believe your story,' and my inability to believe it will still be reasonable. But the grounds of this reasonableness are now quite different from what they were at first. There is no longer any inconsistency in his story, now that he has explained what he meant. It is logically possible that there should be a creature which is in many ways like a trout and yet is warm-blooded. If I *now* say, 'I cannot believe that,' I say so not on logical grounds, but on evidential ones. It is now the evidential criterion of reasonableness, and not the consistency criterion, which justifies my inability to believe. It is empirically

another proposition  $q$  may be something equally unreasonable; nevertheless,  $q$  may happen to be true.

It was worth while to explain that inability to believe something *can* be perfectly reasonable, just because it is so very often unreasonable or at any rate non-reasonable. When a man says 'I cannot believe  $p$ ', 'nothing would induce me to believe it', what prevents him from believing it, very often, is not that he has strong evidence against the proposition, nor yet the fact that he has detected an internal inconsistency in it, but just some emotion or desire which he has. He cannot believe the proposition because he so much *wants* it to be false, or because the situation would be so upsetting or shocking or terrifying if the proposition were true. He just cannot believe that the train will arrive late, because he will get into so much trouble if it does. Some people cannot believe that the works of John Bunyan have any merit at all, because he came from Bedford and they have such an intense dislike for that town and everything to do with it. This same dislike makes them unable, or hardly able, to believe that the road which passes through Bedford is the shortest route from Oxford to Cambridge. A more serious sort of example, which I shall discuss later, is one in which much stronger emotions are involved—stronger in the sense both of being more intense and of being more deeply rooted, as it were, in our emotional life. Newman says somewhere that a man cannot believe that his most intimate friend is false to him. Again, in time of war a fervent patriot cannot believe that his country was the aggressor, and up to the last moment he cannot believe that it is going to be defeated.

I am not sure, however, whether this 'cannot' is always a pure and simple inability—i.e. whether it always means that it just is not in the person's power to believe the proposition. What makes me doubt this is the fact that in such circumstances we sometimes say not just 'I cannot believe it' but 'I cannot and will not believe it' ('I can't believe it, and what is more, I won't').

This conjunctive statement or conjunctive expression of attitude is rather puzzling. At first sight there even seems to be a logical inconsistency in it. Surely if it makes sense to say 'I will not believe it' (i.e. 'I have resolved not to') then it must be true that I *can* believe it—the very thing which the first part of my utterance denies. If I resolve not to do  $x$ , or refuse to do it, surely  $x$  must be something which I am able to do. If a man says 'I don't get up' surely he is thereby admitting that he is able to get up. He has the power to get up, but he refuses to exercise it. You can refuse to exercise a power only if you do actually have it, or at least assume that you have.

But when a man says 'I can't and won't believe this', perhaps



believe that many of the people who went on crusades in the Middle Ages were moved by motives of simple Christian piety. He cannot afford to believe this proposition and he refuses to believe it.

But when someone cannot afford to believe a proposition  $p$ , his motives may be more respectable than these. Misguidedly or not, he may think it is his *duty* to believe a proposition  $q$ , which would be rendered false or less probable if  $p$  were true. Again, he may think it his duty to go on believing  $q$  as firmly as he did before, in spite of the adverse evidence which has just been brought to his notice. Then, taking the moral attitude he does, he cannot *morally* afford to believe the proposition  $p$ . When he says 'I cannot believe  $p$ ' (adding, perhaps, 'and I won't believe it') this is rather like saying that one *cannot* go to London today, because one has promised to have tea with one's next-door neighbour this afternoon, or to take one's Australian cousin round the colleges of Oxford. This moral justification which one gives for saying one cannot go may of course be fictitious. But the fiction works only because such moral justifications for the 'cannot' are often perfectly genuine.

I shall have more to say later about the conception of a duty to believe. The point at present is merely to elucidate the sense of 'cannot believe' in which it means 'cannot afford to'. It is possible that someone cannot afford this on moral grounds, i.e. because of the (second-order) belief which he has that there are certain propositions which he is morally obliged to believe and not merely because of his emotional commitments.

Finally, there is still another sort of inability to believe which does not fall under any of the heads so far mentioned. Here, it is not that one has strong evidence to the contrary (*rational* inability to believe) nor yet that one cannot afford to believe the proposition, either because of emotional commitments or on moral grounds. What the 'cannot believe' indicates may be just intellectual inertia. The man is simply unable to make the intellectual readjustments which would be required if he did accept the proposition. He would have to reconsider many of his present beliefs if he did, modifying some of them and abandoning others. Perhaps he would be willing to make these changes if he could. But the task is too much for him. He just lacks the necessary intellectual power, the mental flexibility which would be needed.

We may now consider some implications of this whole group of phrases, of which 'cannot believe' is one. Others are 'can believe', 'easy to believe', 'difficult to believe', 'almost impossible to believe' and also 'will not believe' and 'quite willing to believe'. Taken

## *Belief and will*

together, these phrases suggest that belief is, normally, something voluntary; that we can decide voluntarily what to believe and what not to believe.

'Cannot believe', taken by itself, might of course appear to suggest the contrary. But as we have seen, the 'cannot' often means 'cannot afford to', and *this has the implication that it is in one's power to believe the proposition if one chooses*. Only, as it happens, one makes the opposite choice, because of the emotionally disagreeable results of believing, or sometimes because one would have a feeling of moral guilt if one did believe the proposition. It is true that there are cases where 'cannot believe' does just mean literally what it says, namely that it just is not in the man's power to believe the proposition. But it looks as if these cases were regarded as exceptional; as if the normal and ordinary state of things were that we *can* believe whatever we choose to believe. This suggestion that belief is normally something voluntary is strengthened when we recall what was said earlier. Inability to believe seems to be regarded as the upper limit of a scale of increasing difficulty. The word 'difficult', in its various degrees, is applicable only to things which are in our power. It is in our power to achieve them, though only with an effort—small, great or very great, as the case may be. And finally, the suggestion that belief is normally something voluntary is strengthened still further when we consider such expressions as 'I *won't* believe that', 'I just *refuse* to believe it'.

Accordingly, it is not at all surprising to find that some people use moral obligation words in connexion with believing, as I have already remarked. If, or to the extent that, believing is something under our voluntary control, it does at any rate make sense to say that X ought, is morally bound, to believe a proposition *p* and ought not to believe *q* or has no moral right to believe it; though there might still, of course, be exceptional cases where he could not help believing *q* or could not help withholding belief from *p*. (Cf. 'He could not help breaking his promise, because the train was an hour late.')

not to do his duty. Surely he deserves to be punished for this moral delinquency; and the more important the proposition is which he refuses to believe, the more drastic the punishment should be.

But though the doctrine does have these terrifying implications, it might of course be true for all that. Moreover, someone might argue, I suppose, that although there is a *prima facie* duty to punish misbelievers or suppress them by force, there is a conflicting *prima facie* duty which always, in practice, outweighs it; namely, the duty to preserve peace both within our own community and between one community and another.

There is no doubt that some people do use moral-obligation words in connexion with beliefs. They say that X *ought* to believe a proposition *p* and not just in the intellectually-normative sense of the word 'ought', meaning that if he were to believe *p*, he would be believing reasonably, but in the moral sense of 'ought'. They really do think that X has a moral duty to believe *p*, or to go on believing it when he is inclined to give up his belief. What has led them to such an extraordinary opinion? Let us consider some examples.

You may remember the story about the Dean of a certain college interviewing an undergraduate who had climbed into the college at 2 a.m. that morning. The undergraduate gave some very unconvincing explanation; he had not realized that his watch was two and a half hours slow. The Dean replied, 'Of course I am bound to believe you; and now I am going to fine you £5.' But when the Dean said, 'I am bound [morally obliged] to believe you', with the implication that he had actually carried out this moral duty of believing, it would seem that his remark was highly elliptical. He meant, 'I am morally obliged to *say the words* "I believe you"', and I hereby do say them'; or again, 'I am morally obliged *not* to use words expressive of doubt or disbelief about your story, and I hereby refrain from using them'. A solicitor might say the same sort of thing to a client whom he has undertaken to defend. 'Of course I am bound to believe what you tell me.' He may say this, although he has the gravest doubts of his client's veracity. The moral duty which he acknowledges and carries out is just the duty to say the words 'I believe you' or to refrain from saying words which would express disbelief or doubt.

It may be true, sometimes, that one really does have a moral duty to utter words expressive of belief, or to refrain from uttering words expressive of doubt. It may also sometimes be our duty to *act as if* we believed a proposition, or to act in other ways as if we believed it, for uttering words to someone is itself a kind of action. I find a rather disreputable-looking individual wandering about the garden by night. He says he was looking for the back door because

he wanted to ask the way to the London road. I take him to the front gate and show him which way he should go, though all the time I strongly suspect that his intention was to burgle the house.

But though we may sometimes have a moral obligation to express belief or to act as if we believed—things which certainly are under our voluntary control—it will not of course follow from this that we ever have a moral obligation to *believe* (or not to believe, as the case may be). And it will not follow that believing itself is under our voluntary control, merely because the outward signs of it are.

Let us now consider a more plausible example, where it does look as if belief itself, not merely the outward signs of it, might be a matter of moral obligation. I am thinking of a situation which quite often occurs in Victorian novels, and I suppose it must have occurred quite often in real life at that time, though it is not so common in our present degenerate period. It would seem that nineteenth-century ladies acknowledged a moral obligation to believe that their husbands or fiancés were impeccably virtuous. When testimony, even quite strong testimony, was put before them to the contrary, they thought it their moral duty to persist in their belief all the same; to *go on* believing, as firmly as before, that their husbands or fiancés were impeccably virtuous, in spite of this adverse evidence. And it would seem that many of them succeeded in carrying out this duty, amidst universal applause. They might perhaps have some inclination to consider the adverse evidence on its merits. But this inclination must be resisted and overcome. Granted that one has a moral duty to believe *p*, one has a consequent duty to disbelieve *q* where the truth of *q*, if it were true, would be evidence against the truth of *p*; and not only where *q*, if true, would be *conclusive* evidence against the proposition which it is one's duty to believe, but also when it would be strong or fairly strong evidence against, even though not conclusive.

Sometimes, it would seem, this duty of believing (and of not believing) was supposed to extend still further. It was held that there was a moral obligation to believe that all the members of one's family were persons of the highest excellence, or at least of great excellence; and an obligation to go on believing this, come what may; and a consequent obligation to *disbelieve* evidence to the contrary—always, or at least nearly always, for just occasionally the adverse evidence might be so overwhelming that it would be beyond the power of even the most high-principled person to resist it.

What are we to make of this doctrine? I suspect that it is still quite widely held, though not perhaps in quite such an uncompromising form, and nowadays it is not so often stated explicitly. It

itself, one of the many different ways in which it may manifest itself thereafter is by subsequent acts of assenting or assent-occurrences. Now when our belief is a reasonable one, this assenting, and especially the initial assent, has a *preferential* character. For some time we were in a state of indecision, sitting on the fence as it were. We considered various alternative propositions  $p$ ,  $q$ , and  $r$ , together with the evidence for and against each of them. But finally, as a result of this weighing of evidence, we prefer or 'plump for'  $p$ , because this is the alternative which our evidence, taken as a whole, appears to us to favour. We no longer sit on the fence as we were doing before, but come down on one side. We decide for  $p$  in *preference* to  $q$  and  $r$ .

Now because of this preferential element in it, assent may look rather like voluntary choice. But the appearance is deceptive. It is not a free choice at all, but a forced one. If you are in a reasonable frame of mind (as we are assuming that you are in this case) you cannot help preferring the proposition which the evidence favours, much as you may wish you could. I mean, you cannot help preferring the proposition which *your* evidence favours, the evidence *you* are at the moment attending to, though the evidence which other people have may of course be different. It is no good refusing to assent to  $p$  in such circumstances, though of course you may *say* to other people, or even to yourself, 'I refuse to assent to it'. It just is not in your power to avoid assenting to the proposition which the evidence (your evidence) favours, or to assent instead to some other proposition when the evidence (your evidence) is manifestly unfavourable to it.

Thus we come back to the question raised before. Can one make oneself believe something, or make oneself go on believing it, just by an effort of will? How would one set about performing this duty—if it is indeed a duty? It seems to me pretty clear that one cannot do it directly, by just making a voluntary effort here and now. Nevertheless, there is some sense in the expressions 'I won't believe  $q$ ', 'I will believe  $p$ ' or 'I will go on believing  $p$  as before, in spite of all'. Indirectly, though not directly, and over a period of time, though not instantaneously, one *can* voluntarily control one's beliefs—at any rate up to a point. If so, it does at any rate make sense (whether or not it is true) to suggest that there are some propositions which we have a moral duty to believe and others which we have a moral duty to disbelieve.

Beliefs can be gradually cultivated, though they cannot be instantaneously produced or abolished at will. They can also be preserved when one is in danger of losing them. Doubts or inclinations to disbelieve, occasioned by adverse evidence, cannot be abolished instantaneously by a mere *fist* of will here and now. But

we have it in our power to weaken our doubts little by little, until at last they fade away and are felt no longer. This is a thing one can do (usually) if one tries hard enough and long enough, and thereby one can voluntarily restore or revive a belief which one was in danger of losing. So again it does make sense, whether or not it is true, to say that one sometimes has a moral duty to take steps to preserve one's belief in spite of strong adverse evidence. The prerequisite that 'ought implies can' is after all fulfilled. And when someone who intends to carry out this duty says, 'I *will* go on believing *p*', 'I *refuse* to give up believing it', he should be understood to mean that he has resolved to take these steps, and to persist in his gradual belief-restoring procedure until the cure is complete. We must now consider how he is to set about it.

The crucial point here is that the direction of our attention is to a large extent in our own power. One can voluntarily avert one's attention from the adverse evidence; one can refuse to consider it whenever it comes into one's mind. Or if this is too difficult at first (it becomes easier in time) one can at least weaken the effect of the adverse evidence by directing one's attention to the general truth that testimony is often erroneous, or to the possibility that there may be some alternative explanation of the events reported. Again, one can fix one's attention upon the evidence which favours the proposition one wants to believe or to go on believing, as well as averting one's attention from the adverse evidence. There is almost sure to be some favourable evidence, and there may well be a good deal. Make the most of it. Dwell on it in thought as much as you can.

By such systematic and voluntary direction of the attention, continued over a sufficiently long period, one may manage in time to do what is demanded. By degrees, though not immediately, one will probably get back into the state where one again believes the proposition *p* without any doubts or qualms. 'I must be loyal to X not only in my actions but in my inmost thoughts.' That is the obligation which these Victorian ladies were supposed to undertake.<sup>2</sup> 'Being loyal to him in one's inmost thought' consisted, I suggest, in a habit of directing one's attention appropriately, by attending carefully and repeatedly to all the evidence which is creditable to X, and averting one's attention from all the evidence which is discreditable to him. By such methods one gets back into the state where the *only* evidence before one's mind is favourable to the proposition one wishes to believe. When that state is reached, and so long as it is maintained, there is no difficulty in believing the proposition as firmly as one did before, when the adverse evidence had not yet come to one's notice.

This, I suspect, is what these Victorian ladies did, and were so highly approved of for doing. This was how they managed to carry out the rather difficult duty, which public opinion imposed on them, of believing—or continuing to believe—in spite of adverse evidence. Of course, if the adverse evidence was *very* strong, the voluntary effort required for directing one's attention continually in the appropriate manner might be very great. But then the moral approval one received for fulfilling one's duty was correspondingly higher.

I said just now that by this voluntary and systematic direction of attention they got themselves into a state where the only evidence *before their minds* was favourable to the proposition which they 'ought' to believe. What their unconscious or sub-conscious state of mind might be is another question. One might suspect, perhaps, that the memory of the adverse evidence, which they so carefully and diligently dismissed from consciousness, was not got rid of altogether; that it was still retained unconsciously (all the more so because strong emotions were attached to it) and still had its effect upon them. If you could have examined their dreams, or their slips of the tongue or the pen, or other things they said and did when they were 'off their guard', you might have found that Mrs X's unconscious beliefs about Mr X were rather different from her conscious ones, and even opposed to them.

There is, however, another method of voluntarily cultivating beliefs, and perhaps these Victorian ladies practised it too. Probably it has had its practitioners in all ages, since the dawn of human history. This method is not concerned with the evidence for or against the proposition one wishes to believe or go on believing. And if it is effective it gets one into a state where one no longer bothers about evidence at all.

Here again the essential point is the voluntary direction of attention. But now we just fix our attention on the proposition itself. We dwell on it in thought and bring it before our mind repeatedly. We also consider repeatedly the consequences which the proposition entails and the further consequences which it makes probable. This may be summed up by saying that one fixes one's attention repeatedly on what it would be like if the proposition were true. If one is good at imaging, one may also find it helpful to *image* in as much detail as possible the kind of situation there would be if the proposition were true. Images, for some people at least, have a more powerful emotional effect than words have. So if we can succeed in 'cashing' the proposition with images, emotional attitudes will tend to be aroused with regard to it. Thereby we shall come to take the proposition more seriously. By cashing it with images, we shall come to

'realize what it means' in a way we did not before. It will cease to be a mere verbal formula, as perhaps it was at first, or was in danger of becoming. This is one of the points which Newman is making when he distinguishes between 'Real Assent' and 'Notional Assent', if I understand him rightly.<sup>3</sup>

This procedure of dwelling upon the proposition in thought may be supplemented by behaviouristic methods. Whenever an opportunity arises, you make a point of acting as if the proposition were true, and you get yourself into the habit of acting in that manner. You even go out of your way to *make* opportunities of acting as if the proposition were true. For example, you go out of your way to be seen in X's company when you could easily have avoided it. You go out of your way to attend minor meetings of the Party, though you would have got into no trouble if you had stayed at home. By this procedure you commit yourself, as it were, to the proposition which you wish to believe. Pascal recommends somewhere that if a man's religious faith is weak, he should 'Use holy water and order masses to be said'.

By such methods—by dwelling upon a proposition continually and repeatedly, by considering again and again what it would be like if it were true and imaging in detail what it would be like (if you can), by acting as if the proposition were true on all occasions to which its truth or falsity is relevant and by increasing the number of these occasions whenever possible—by such means you will gradually get into a state of believing the proposition. You will wake up one fine day and find that you do believe it. Or if you believed it already, by these methods you will get into a state where you believe it almost unshakeably; a state in which you no longer have to bother about adverse evidence, or indeed about favourable evidence either. You may still be perfectly ready to discuss the evidence, adverse as well as favourable, showing due respect to those who disagree with you. You may even write whole books on the subject. But all this will be done with a certain inner reservation, as it were. The discussion of the evidence will not make any real difference to you. Your belief will still remain as it was, whichever way the discussion goes. Of course, the state you have got into is one of non-reasonable belief, just because it is independent of the evidence (which will not necessarily prevent the proposition believed from being true). But the point at present is that it is a state of belief, and of very firm belief too; and that it is brought into existence by your own voluntary efforts, or *mutatis mutandis* restored by your own voluntary efforts when you were in danger of losing it. Everyone admits, of course, that such a state can be produced in us involuntarily, by what is called Social Conditioning (the process which Hume in the *Treatise*



calls 'education'). But it was worth while to point out that it can be produced voluntarily too, though only with considerable effort and trouble, continued over a long period of time.

I conclude from these considerations that when William James talked about 'the will to believe' there was after all some sense in what he said, though the name is not a very good one, and the process should rather be described as the voluntary cultivation of belief. It would seem too that there is some sense in saying 'I *won't* believe *p*' 'I *will* believe *p*' or 'I *will* go on believing it, in spite of everything'. Moreover, when we say 'it is difficult or very difficult for me [or for X] to believe this', 'it is easy, or quite easy, for me to believe that', these words really do sometimes have the literal and volitional sense which they have in other contexts. It is true that these volitional words—'won't', 'will', 'difficult', 'easy'—have no application to a momentary act of assent. The most one can voluntarily do there is to say the words 'I assent to *p*' or otherwise behave as if one were assenting to it, for instance by signing one's name on the dotted line at the foot of the page. But these volitional words do apply to beliefs, in the sense in which a belief is a persistent state or disposition. This state can be acquired or abolished, strengthened or weakened, by a longish course of voluntary effort, though not by a mere momentary *fiat* of will here and now. Moreover, it is conceivable that when someone says, 'I cannot possibly bring myself to believe *p*,' he is mistaken. Perhaps he could and would acquire this belief if he tried hard enough and long enough and used the psychological techniques (directing attention, etc.) which I have described. Similarly, a man may be mistaken when he says, 'I cannot go on believing *p* as I did.' Perhaps he could and would restore his belief by means of these methods if he tried hard enough and long enough. Of course, when he says he cannot bring himself to believe the proposition *p*, or to go on believing it as he used to, he may be saying that the evidence which he has, or the new evidence he has just acquired, makes it unreasonable for him to believe the proposition. If so, he will no doubt refuse to use the belief-inducing techniques which I have described. But this refusal is a voluntary choice too. He resolves to go on being reasonable, to continue to regulate his beliefs in accordance with the strength of the evidence available to him.

in thinking that belief is wholly involuntary. It is true that this duty, if it is one, should rather be described as a duty to direct our attention in certain ways and to continue doing so, a process which may be expected to *result* in belief or in the restoration of a belief we might otherwise have lost. But to say 'X has a duty to believe *p*' (or to go on believing it) would be a natural enough abbreviation for 'he has a duty to take steps which will result in his believing *p*' (or in his continuing to believe it).

Nevertheless, the doctrine that there is sometimes a moral obligation to believe may still be false, even though it is not absurd. Even though it is often in our power to cultivate beliefs by a course of voluntary effort, it does not follow from this that we ever have a moral obligation to make such efforts. Even in the sphere of outward conduct there are surely many actions which are morally indifferent. They are neither actions which we are morally bound to do, nor actions which we are morally bound to refrain from. And the voluntary cultivation of beliefs, or the voluntary strengthening of beliefs we already have, might likewise be morally indifferent activities. If they are, it is something to be thankful for. We have already noticed the horrifying consequences which follow from the doctrine that there is a moral obligation to believe.

But surely it is sometimes a man's duty to direct his attention in this way rather than that, and to continue doing so. Of course it may be. It is the professional duty of a plumber's apprentice, at least in his working hours, to direct his thoughts to the properties of lead, and to do so repeatedly until these properties are thoroughly familiar to him. It is the professional duty of a classical schoolmaster to consider intently and frequently the anomalous behaviour of certain Greek and Latin verbs. Again, if you have promised to give a message to someone by word of mouth, it may be your duty to go over the contents of the message on the way, and to do so several times, so that you will not have forgotten it by the time you arrive. Moreover, if, or to the extent that, the direction of our thoughts in this way rather than that has an effect on other people for good or harm, in a telepathic manner, to that extent the notion of moral obligation applies to it.

But in so far as the direction of our attention is relevant to the formation of beliefs or to the strengthening or weakening of beliefs which we already have, I think we should be very reluctant to admit that the notion of moral obligation applies to it. My grounds for saying so are themselves in part moral or quasi-moral ones. It seems to me that we are all far too much addicted to blaming people as it is. If we are to be allowed, or even encouraged, to blame them for the way they direct their thoughts, as well as for their actions,

there will be a perfect orgy of moral indignation and condemnation, and charity will almost disappear from the world.

Let us consider the example of the Victorian ladies which I discussed before. Surely it is clear that they did *not* have a duty to cultivate these beliefs about the virtues of their husbands or fiancés. They did *not* have a duty to suppress their doubts on the matter by systematically averting their attention from the adverse evidence. To do so may well have been excusable, but surely it was not morally obligatory. Still less did they have a duty to adopt the second procedure I mentioned, by which one gets oneself into a state of believing which is indifferent to evidence altogether—a non-rational state of unquestioning and undoubting acceptance.

One might even be inclined to say that they had a duty to do precisely the opposite, a duty to consider the evidence both *pro* and *con*, with the result that they would give up their beliefs (or hold them with less confidence, as the case may be) if the adverse evidence was strong enough. And *a fortiori*, one might be inclined to say, they not only had no duty to adopt, but actually had a duty to avoid, the second procedure, which results in a non-rational state of undoubting acceptance, a state in which one is indifferent to evidence altogether. In short, we might be inclined to say that there is a moral duty to be *reasonable* in one's believing, or as reasonable as one can; a duty to consider impartially all the evidence one can lay hands upon, regardless of one's like or dislikes, and to believe in accordance with the evidence. It would follow from this that we might often have a duty to revise or abandon one of our beliefs when new evidence was brought to our notice; and also, I suppose, that we have a duty to suspend judgment when the evidence is evenly balanced or too slight in quantity to justify a reasonable belief either way.

But if we do say these things, I think we go too far the other way; too far in the opposite direction from those moralists by whom these Victorian ladies were victimized. I think we are confusing the moral 'ought' with the prudential 'ought'.

Reasonable belief, and therefore the impartial consideration of evidence, is something which is to one's long-term advantage, however distressing it may sometimes be in the short run. If we say that a man *ought* to believe only that proposition which the evidence favours, that he *ought* to consider the evidence impartially, this is like saying that a man with a decayed tooth ought to go to the dentist; it is to his long-term advantage to go, though it is unpleasant or inconvenient at the moment. Or again, it is like saying that Smith ought to get up at 7.30 tomorrow morning because he will miss his train if he does not get up by then. (We may suppose that he is going

on a holiday, and missing his train will harm nobody but himself.)

Or perhaps one should put it this way, as I think Professor Braithwaite would: what is for our long-term advantage, though often unpleasant in the short run, is the *general policy* of forming one's beliefs in accordance with the balance of the evidence. Why is this policy to be recommended on prudential grounds? Because it is for our advantage that the propositions we believe should be true, or that as many of them as possible should be true. This is obviously advantageous on practical grounds. True beliefs are better guides to action than false ones. But I think we also have some desire for truth for its own sake. Even when it makes no practical difference, we prefer to believe truly rather than falsely. We need beliefs at all only as a substitute for knowledge where knowledge is not available, or not at present available. (This still remains so even if you think that knowledge is just a special sort of belief; only you will then say that beliefs which do not qualify as knowledge are a substitute for those which do.) False beliefs are poor substitutes for knowledge, though it must be admitted that sometimes we cannot acquire true ones without holding false ones first, and then testing them and finding them to be false.

Now by adopting the policy of forming our beliefs reasonably, the policy of believing in accordance with the evidence and revising or abandoning our beliefs, in the light of new evidence, we do not of course ensure that *all* the propositions we believe will be true, or even that any of them will be *certainly* true. But when we reflect on the meaning of the word 'evidence' we see that the policy of believing in accordance with the evidence is the only one which will ensure that the propositions we believe are more *likely* to be true than false. For when we say that such-and-such facts or experiences are evidence for a proposition *p*, we just mean that they make it likely in some degree to be true. And so in preferring a proposition for which the evidence is stronger to a proposition for which the evidence is weaker, we are *ipso facto* preferring the one which is more likely to be true. The statement that one is more likely to believe truly if one believes reasonably (that is, in accordance with the evidence) is an analytic statement which follows from the meanings of the expressions 'evidence for' and 'likely to be true'.

Thus, if it is to our long-term advantage to believe truly rather than falsely, it is also to our long-term advantage to adopt and to stick to the policy of believing reasonably. I conclude, then, that there are very good grounds for applying the *prudential* 'ought' to the process of forming beliefs, though there are no good grounds for applying the *moral* 'ought' to it.

Thus, if I am right, it is misleading to speak of the 'Ethics of

## *Belief and will*

Belief'. But there *is* such a thing as the Economics of Belief, if one may use the word 'Economics' in a wide and old-fashioned sense to mean 'the theory of produce', the theory of those activities, both mental and physical, which conduce to our long-term advantage.

## Notes

- 1 *Treatise*, appendix, Everyman ed., vol. 2, pp. 313-14.
- 2 If I recollect rightly, it is formulated in this way by one of Trollope's heroines.
- 3 J. H. Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, Longmans, 1891, ch. 4. The word 'real', I think, is used by this classically-minded writer in its Latin sense of 'thingish' (cf. the legal phrase 'Real Property').

G. Pitcher

I HAVE two main aims in this paper: to show that one important traditional theory as to the nature of the emotions is fundamentally wrong, and to show that having an emotion is a much more complicated affair than it is often supposed to be.

The traditional theory I wish to criticize is that to have an emotion is just to have a certain unique inner feeling or group of inner feelings, to undergo a special inner experience. I shall refer to this hereafter as the Traditional View, or sometimes simply as the View. In most versions of the View, for 'inner' one can read 'mental'. The feelings that are alleged to be involved are just like sensations such as pains, tickles and itches, in that they are immediately felt or experienced and have a fairly definite duration, but they differ from them in being mental rather than physical. The View is an attractive one, and might well be that which unreflective common sense would adopt. Hume certainly held it (see *A Treatise of Human Nature*, bk II, pt I, sect. 1). William James, in certain passages, adopts another version of it: he maintains that the feelings are not peculiarly mental ones, but just the sensations of the bodily changes which occur when one has the emotion.

*My theory . . . is that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion.*<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I shall make no attempt to distinguish between physical sensations and the sort of mental feelings I have described, since what I have to say is independent of that distinction. Most of the time, I shall refer elastically to both as sensations.

Emotions are very often, and perhaps always, directed towards something: a person is afraid of Smith, is afraid that it will fall, is angry at Jones, is indignant because his name was withdrawn, is overjoyed at the turn of events in Ceylon and so on. Of cases like these, I shall say that the emotion has an object or is directed towards an object. Note that I thus use the expressions 'having an object' and 'being directed towards an object' very broadly: when I say that an

emotion is directed towards an object I do not necessarily mean that there is some individual thing, person or animal towards which it is directed. If a person is standing on a swaying bridge and is afraid of falling into the gorge, there is no individual *thing*, in the sense of physical object, person, animal, etc., that is the object of his fear. Still, there is a reference to something beyond the person himself, or beyond his present state, or at least beyond the emotion itself. There is, in short, some 'intentionality', and this is all that I mean when I say that an emotion has an object or is directed towards an object. Still, it will prove convenient to have a distinction between emotions which are, and those which are not, directed towards a particular thing, person or animal (or group of them); so I shall call the former *agent-directed emotions* and the latter *non-agent-directed emotions*.

How can the Traditional View account for this feature of most, if not all, emotions? How can a sensation have an object? Certainly it makes no sense to speak of bodily sensations of themselves being directed towards anything: a pain cannot be a pain of, or towards, anything. And mental sensations do not seem to contain anything that would allow them to be directed towards an object either. The Traditional View is evidently forced to admit that there must be some kind of 'cognition' accompanying an emotion in order to account for the emotion's having an object. The emotion itself consists just in the sensation, but the accompanying cognitive element is what directs the sensation, and hence the emotion, towards its object.

The question now arises: what sort of cognition is it that is supposed to accompany the emotion? In what does the cognition consist? Leaving aside those cases in which the object of the emotion is something immediately confronting the person, there are any number of answers to this question which a defender of the Traditional View might offer. The most plausible, however, seem to be the following:

1. The cognitive element consists in the having of an image; the mere having of the image is what directs the emotion (i.e. the sensation) towards its object, namely, that which the image is an image of.

2. The cognitive element is twofold: it consists in the having of an image plus the belief that the emotion (i.e. the sensation) is directed towards the object of the image (what the image is an image of).

3. The cognitive element consists in having the belief that the emotion (i.e. the sensation) is directed towards a certain object *O*.

No full-scale criticism of these replies is possible here, but I shall indicate briefly why they seem to me to be unacceptable. I shall begin with the first reply and use anger as an example of an emotion.

According to the Traditional View a person's anger is one thing and his image another—it is an accompaniment of his anger. But, then, it must be possible on occasion for the wrong image to come before a person's mind when he is angry. This possibility proves fatal to the first reply. According to that reply, the having of the image of an object is the very thing that directs a person's emotion towards that object. Hence, if the image of his uncle comes before someone's mind while he is experiencing feelings of anger, then he is necessarily angry with him, and it will not make sense to say either that he is really angry with someone else (e.g. his father) or that he realizes that he is not really angry with his uncle, but rather with someone else (e.g. his father).

But suppose Smith receives a letter which he knows to be from his father in which his father insults Smith viciously. It might happen, for one reason or another, that an image of Smith's uncle comes before his mind while he is experiencing feelings of anger: according to the first reply, we must say that he is therefore necessarily angry with his uncle, despite the fact that the uncle may have nothing to do with the letter and Smith may very well know it. And this is absurd. Or suppose the letter that angers Smith says that Smith's father brutally and unjustly struck his wife (Smith's mother). If any image comes before his mind, it is doubtless that of his mother in floods of tears, and according to the first reply, Smith would then have to be angry with *her*. But this, too, is absurd. It is not in the least self-contradictory for a person to assert that he is angry with his father but that the only image before his mind is that of his uncle or of his mother, yet the first reply makes this state of affairs logically impossible.

The second and third replies can be disposed of together. Neither of these replies is satisfactory, for both are circular. Both replies claim that the person having the emotion must have a belief of a certain sort, namely, a belief that the emotion (i.e. the sensation) is directed towards a certain object. But what is it that he is supposed to believe? What is it for his emotion to be directed towards an object? We cannot understand what it is that he is alleged to be believing until we understand what it is for an emotion to be directed towards an object. But the appeal to the belief was made in the attempt to explicate this very thing. It is evident then that no appeal to any such belief can possibly be made without being circular, i.e. without presupposing a solution to the very problem which the appeal was meant to solve.



We have seen how the Traditional View of emotions runs into serious difficulties in trying to say how an emotion can have an object. There are considerations of quite a different character which also render the View untenable. The first of these is that we can ask for a person's reasons for his emotion or for the grounds of his emotion. ('Why are you afraid of him?' 'Why is he angry with her?' 'I am afraid of him because he hits me all the time.' 'He is angry with her because she threw an egg at him.') The second of these considerations is that depending on the goodness or badness of a person's reasons for his emotion, we can say that it is warranted or unwarranted, justified or unjustified, reasonable or unreasonable and so on. It strikes me as a most important fact about emotions that they can very often be spoken of in these ways, that such things as 'You have no right to be angry with him', 'Your resentment is quite uncalled for', 'You shouldn't be afraid of him: your fear is unreasonable' and so on, can be said.

These considerations seem to render the Traditional View untenable: for although we can speak of emotions in the ways indicated, we cannot do so of sensations; certainly not of bodily sensations, at any rate: it makes no sense to ask for a person's reasons for having a tickling sensation in his throat, or to call a twinge or an itch justified or unjustified, reasonable or unreasonable. And I know of no relevant difference between mental and physical sensations which would permit the former to be judged in these ways either.<sup>2</sup>

The Traditional View may offer the following reply to my criticism:

The emotion still consists of nothing but sensations, but it can be called reasonable or unreasonable depending on its causes, if it be granted that the causes of emotions are always beliefs—and in fact this seems to be the case. For example, suppose the cause of a person's fear of falling into the river is his belief that the bridge he is on is unsafe. The fear can be called unreasonable if this belief is unreasonable, and reasonable if the belief is so.

It is highly doubtful that this reply adequately explains how, on the Traditional View, emotions can be reasonable or unreasonable. One surely cannot explain in this way how bodily sensations might be deemed reasonable or unreasonable. If my headache is caused by the belief that my fortune has been lost, no one would be tempted to judge my headache unreasonable on the grounds that my belief is so. One feels that no alleged explanation

could possibly be sound, since it seems to make no sense to speak of a bodily sensation being reasonable or unreasonable, justified or unjustified and so on; and on the Traditional View, the same must be said of emotions. The View does not allow the notions of reasonableness and justifiability to gain any foothold in the concept of an emotion.

Hume takes the bull by the horns and boldly states that emotions cannot be reasonable or unreasonable, although he admits that one can sometimes speak loosely of the unreasonableness of an emotion:

'Tis only in two senses, that any affection can be call'd unreasonable. First, when a passion, such as hope or fear . . . is founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, when in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects. (*Treatise*, bk II, pt III, sect. 3, p. 416 of the Selby-Bigge edition.)

But strictly speaking, he continues, the emotion itself can never be unreasonable:

In short, a passion must be accompany'd with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then 'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment. (*Ibid.*)

There is much that is wrong with Hume's account. First, his second group of cases does not contain examples of unreasonable emotions at all. Secondly, only some cases of his first type could be called cases of unreasonable emotion. For example, suppose a spinster is frightened because she thinks that there is a man under her bed: if there is no reason whatever to think there is a man there, then her fear is indeed unreasonable. But if she hears a man's voice emerging from under the bed threatening her with bodily harm, her fear is not unreasonable even if it should turn out that there is no man, her friends having played a cruel joke on her with hidden loudspeakers. Thirdly, in the legitimate cases of unreasonable emotions, it is wrong to say, as Hume does, that it is not the emotion itself which is unreasonable but only the judgment, no matter how strictly one speaks: in the first of the two examples involving the spinster her judgment is indeed unreasonable, but so is her fear. To be sure, the feelings of her stomach turning over and her heart racing cannot be called unreasonable, but neither are they her fear.

And finally, Hume is wrong in asserting that it is only 'in two

senses that any affection can be call'd unreasonable': there are many more. Consider the emotion of fear, for example: a person's fear may be unreasonable in at least these five different, although not necessarily mutually exclusive, ways:

1. His reason for being afraid is expressible in a statement which, if true, would state a good reason for being afraid, but which is actually false and, in the given circumstances, obviously false—i.e. it would be unreasonable to believe that it is true. Thus it is unreasonable to be afraid of falling for the reason that the bridge is unsafe, if it is perfectly obvious that the bridge is entirely safe. (Baseless or unfounded fear.)

2. He acknowledges that there is no danger, and yet he is afraid. Thus it is unreasonable to be afraid of falling if one admits that there is no chance whatever of falling, or of a particular cow if one admits that the beast is harmless. (Irrational fear.)

3. His reason for being afraid, although expressed in a true statement, states an extremely bad reason, or what we might call 'no reason', for being afraid. It is unreasonable to be afraid of falling for the reason that a bird has just flown by or that a black cat has just crossed one's path. (Superstitious fear.)

4. The object of his fear is an unsuitable one. For example, it is unreasonable to be afraid of baby lambs (a silly or neurotic fear) or that one's hair might become mussed (a vain or neurotic fear).

5. The object of his fear is a suitable one, but his fear is too great. It is reasonable to have a moderate fear of snakes, but a person's fear of snakes is unreasonable if he is so afraid of them that he faints at the sight of them, even in a zoo. (Abnormal or inordinate fear. One cannot have an abnormal fear of baby lambs, because there is no such thing as a normal fear of them.)

If the Traditional View is unable, as it evidently is, to account for all these types of unreasonableness of emotions, it must be rejected, and so a fresh start has to be made. What I propose to do in the next section is to look at typical emotion-situations—i.e. situations in which someone has an emotion—and try to discover what their characteristic features are.

When it is said of someone that he has an emotion, this may be said of him either in 1. an *occurrent* or in 2. a *dispositional* sense. A person who is frightened by a face at the window, or gets angry at two boys because they are mistreating a dog, has an emotion in the former, *occurrent*, sense—he is actually *in the grip of* the emotion. But a person who hates his father, or is jealous of his landlord, has an emotion in the latter, *dispositional*, sense—he may not actually be feeling the emotion now. Some emotion-words are used primarily in

an occurrent sense (e.g. 'frightened'), some primarily in a dispositional sense (e.g. 'love', 'hate', 'envy'), and many are frequently used in both senses (e.g. 'afraid', 'angry'). In cases of type 1. I shall say that a person has an *occurrent emotion*, and in type 2. a *dispositional emotion*. So, for example, if Paul sees two boys mistreating a dog, and becomes angry at them for it, he has an occurrent emotion; but if Paul was insulted by Jerome and is angry with him for a week thereafter (although not, of course, actually *feeling* angry all that time), he has a dispositional emotion during that week.

It seems that a factual belief, or some factual knowledge or awareness, is required if a person is to have either an occurrent or a dispositional emotion. Consider an agent-directed emotion—agent-directed anger, for example. Suppose P is angry at Jones or at the man who was in the kitchen last night. In order for this to be the case, P must at least believe that there is someone called Jones or that there was a man in the kitchen last night. However, it would be infelicitous to insist that there must in every case be a relevant *belief*. If Jones, well known to P, is standing directly before P in broad daylight, it would be inappropriate to say that P believes there is a man called Jones: the concept of belief does not apply in such circumstances. P then simply *sees* Jones. Under other conditions, we may have to speak rather of P's knowing, or being aware, or assuming, that Jones exists. To cover this wide range of cases with an artificial portmanteau expression, let us say that one feature of an agent-directed emotion is that the angry person has some kind of general *apprehension*, or *misapprehension*, of the object of his emotion. (The qualification 'or misapprehension', which is necessary in order to include false beliefs, false assumptions, mis-seeings of various kinds and so on, will henceforth be omitted.)

In the case of non-agent-directed emotions, the person must apprehend whatever feature of the situation—past, present or future—is the object of his emotion. Thus if a person is irritated because it is raining, he must believe, know, assume or whatever—i.e. he must apprehend—that it is raining. And if a person is frightened of falling off the ledge, he must apprehend that there is some danger that he might fall off the ledge and so on.

Some form of apprehension of the object is obviously but a bare minimum condition for having an emotion. We must now move closer to the heart of the matter. An important characteristic of occurrent-emotion-situations is evidently that the person acts or behaves, or at least has an inclination to act or behave, in certain ways. If Paul is afraid of falling into the river, he walks carefully, holds on to things, looks down cautiously into the torrent and so on. If something prevents him from behaving so, or if he just considers

it, for one reason or another, better not to behave so—if, in short, he hides or controls his emotion—he at least has an inclination to behave in these ways. Again, if Paul is angry at two boys for mistreating a dog, he rushes to stop them, hits them or makes threatening movements towards them, drives them off and so on—or at least has an inclination to do so.

Something analogous, but further removed from immediate action, seems to be a salient characteristic of *dispositional-emotion-situations*, something from a wide range which includes such things as a desire to do (or not to do) something, a desire that such-and-such a situation or condition should (or should not) happen or exist, or should (or should not) cease to exist, and even a mere belief that such-and-such a thing, person, situation or condition is, or would be, good (bad) or better (worse) than another. For example, if Paul loves Suzy, he wants to be with her, he wishes good things for her, he wants her to get well when she is ill and so on. If John envies Jim his position, he thinks Jim's position is better than his own, he wants a comparable position for himself and so on.

Modes of behaviour and inclinations to them are typical of occurrent emotions, while wants, desires, beliefs and so on are typical of dispositional emotions; but these correlations are anything but perfect. Thus a want, desire or belief often figures in occurrent emotions: when Paul is frightened of falling, it is certainly true that he wants not to fall, and in some circumstances it may be true to say that he thinks falling would be a bad (horrendous, disastrous) thing. Again, certain dispositional emotions—and perhaps all—can become occurrent: that is, there will be times when the person *feels* them, when they 'well up' inside him. And then certain typical modes of behaviour or inclinations to behave will arise, as in the case of pure occurrent emotions.

These characteristics of different emotion-situations, ranging from modes of behaviour and inclinations to behave (occurrent emotions, primarily) through wants or desires, and up to beliefs like the belief that something is, or would be, good or bad (dispositional emotions, primarily) can all be grouped together under the artificial portmanteau heading of *evaluations*, and can be further subdivided into positive and negative evaluations—that is, evaluations in favour of, and against, respectively, whatever is evaluated.

I want to stress that when I say a person has or makes an evaluation of something, one or more of a whole range of different things might be meant, depending on the circumstances. The term 'evaluation', as I am using it, is not meant to suggest that the person must make an evaluational judgment, or even that he must have what might be called an evaluational belief. Sometimes the evaluation

will be constituted by a conscious judgment or by a belief or assumption, but sometimes not. For example, if Q slaps P in the face, and P becomes angry at this, one would not want to say that P judges that Q's action was a bad thing or even that he believes it to be. He may only angrily strike Q in return. Still, one wants to say something about P's attitude to Q's act in the evaluational dimension: and whatever the most appropriate locution might be in this case, I think it not wholly unnatural to say, as I do, that it will designate a species of negative evaluation.

Perhaps it strikes you as odd to put together in one class (namely that of evaluations) such widely different things as modes of behaviour, inclinations to them, desires and conscious judgments. But although they are obviously in many ways quite different, there is one way in which they are intimately connected. Consider, for example, items from the two ends of the scale—namely, modes of behaviour and conscious judgments: the former, I would argue, are natural manifestations of the latter. Animal-protector Paul, angry at two boys for mistreating a dog, rushes at them, tries to drive them off and so on. Let us suppose that his anger is not blind rage and that he acts in these ways *because* he makes the evaluational judgment that the boys' treatment of the dog is wicked. The 'because' here makes it look as though Paul's evaluational judgment and his modes of behaviour are two wholly different things—perhaps because we compare this case to ones like 'The penny is flat because the train ran over it' or 'The plant is flourishing because Priscilla waters it every day.' But it would be better to compare it rather with cases like 'He kicked the ball because he was trying to score a goal', where the two things mentioned on either side of the 'because' are intimately connected. Paul's behaviour is the natural manifestation of his evaluational judgment, so that there is more than a merely empirical correlation relating them. In the given situation, any person who believes strongly that the boys' behaviour is wicked would normally act as Paul does, or at least have an inclination to do so; and if a person's anger is so great that he makes no conscious evaluational judgment or even has no conscious evaluational belief, then when he acts as Paul does he acts *as if* he made such a judgment or had such a belief. One could almost say that to act as Paul does is to think that the boys' treatment of the dog is wicked. And a similar intimate, more than merely empirical, connexion can be shown to exist between wants or desires and evaluational beliefs or judgments—between, say, wanting a certain car and thinking that it would be a good thing to have it.

For these reasons, I consider it reasonable to include under the heading 'evaluations' such otherwise quite different things as

evaluational modes of behaviour, inclinations to them, wants, desires, assumptions, beliefs and judgments. Some emotions include evaluational beliefs or judgments predominantly—namely, the ‘calm passions’, like envy. Some emotions include desires or wants predominantly—for example, love. And still others—‘hot passions’, like anger—include actions or inclinations to them, predominantly. But this is naturally only a rough statement; most emotions, including those just mentioned, very often include evaluational elements of different kinds—e.g. anger is often characterized by certain modes of action and by a negative evaluational belief or assumption.

An evaluation requires some ‘cognition’, or, to use the artificial portmanteau term already introduced, some apprehension, on the part of the person who makes the evaluation. Suppose Paul is angry at Johnny because he thinks that something Johnny did was wicked: in order to have that evaluational opinion, he must believe, know or assume and so on—i.e. must apprehend—that Johnny did that thing which he considers to be bad. The relation between the evaluation and the apprehension is a logically close one, for the statement of the evaluation entails the statement of the apprehension—the statement that Johnny’s act *x* was bad or wicked entails the statement that Johnny performed act *x*. Since, in agent-directed emotions, the statement of this new apprehension specifies something—some act, ability, trait, propensity, condition or whatever—about the agent that is the object of the emotion, I shall call it, in these cases of agent-directed emotions, *specificatory* apprehension of the object, thus distinguishing it from the general apprehension of the object noted earlier. With non-agent-directed emotions, the distinction between a general apprehension of the object of the emotion and a specificatory apprehension of it cannot, of course, be made: there is just the apprehension of whatever feature of the situation constitutes the object of the emotion.

At this point, the following objection might be raised against my thesis: ‘You yourself have already mentioned a clear counter-example to it, namely irrational fear [example 2., p. 373]. Consider occurrent fear of falling, for example. I grant that most people who are frightened of falling—when they are, say, walking along a swaying bridge or a narrow ledge high above the ground—apprehend (as you put it) that there is a real possibility that they might fall. But as you yourself said, there is also such a thing as an irrational fear of falling: a person is safe behind strong bars on an obviously secure balcony overlooking the street below, and he admits that there is no chance whatever that he might fall, but he is still frightened of falling. So here is an example of fear of falling in which the ap-

prehension of the object is missing—although its shadow, as it were, is admittedly present, since the person acts *as if* he believed he might fall.'

It is difficult to know what one ought to say about cases like these. One might say, for example, that the person described is not really frightened of falling, but is simply nervous or apprehensive. Again, although such a person may hotly deny that he believes he might fall, still a strong case could be made out for the claim that he nevertheless does think he might. His actions, gestures and facial expressions, for example, are those of a man who thinks that he might fall. On the other hand, it also seems plausible to say that the person does not think that he might fall.

But in any event, two points need to be made—a specific one about this particular case and a more general one about the sort of view being defended in this paper. The first and less important point is that the artificial expression 'apprehension' was invented to cover a multitude of 'modes of awareness', of which belief is only one. My thesis does not require that the man who is afraid of falling must believe that he will fall, or even that he believe he might fall. It is enough if he simply imagines himself falling or perhaps thinks that it is conceivable that he could fall.

The second and more general point is that even if there were, in odd cases like that of irrational fear, no sort of apprehension of the object of the fear, this would not upset my thesis. For I am not suggesting that the features of emotions which I have discussed are essential features of absolutely all emotion-situations, but rather something weaker—namely, that they are characteristic features of emotion-situations. In other words, I claim that these features are present in all the standard or central cases, but admit that there are peripheral cases of emotion-situations in which one or perhaps two of them are lacking, although of course I would argue that there can be no cases in which they are *all* missing. Irrational fear of falling is a peripheral case of fear of falling, as is witnessed by the very fact that we dub it 'irrational'. It shares most features with the standard cases of such fear, but also differs from them in the one leading respect that the characteristic apprehension of the object is lacking; and it is only in virtue of the shared features that we call it fear of falling. There is doubtless no single feature that is common to all cases of fear or even to all cases of fear of falling, and my thesis is that some mode of apprehension of the object is a feature of most cases of it, including all the normal or central ones, but not that it is necessarily present in all cases.

The same goes for the element of evaluation: there will be non-standard or peripheral cases of emotions of which one might



plausibly maintain that the person makes no evaluation. Normally, when P hates Q for certain things Q has done, he thinks that these things are bad, detestable, horrendous or something of the sort. If he thought that there was nothing whatever wrong with what Q has done, he could not, without oddity, hate him for having done those things. If P hates Q not for anything he has done, but rather for having a holier-than-thou attitude, for example, he then considers *that* to be a bad thing. But there is doubtless such a thing as irrational hatred, wherein a person apparently hates someone Q (he acts towards Q, let us say, as if he did) and yet does not think, or at least strongly denies that he thinks, that anything Q has done or said, or anything he will do or say, or any of his traits, is in any way bad or reprehensible. (But again the shadow, at least, of some such belief is present.) In this case, too, if we describe the person's emotion as one of hatred, we do so because of the many important features it shares with standard cases of hatred: because he acts towards Q, for example, as a person who hates Q in a standard way might act. (This sort of case, too, is tricky, however. Besides saying that P has an irrational hatred of Q, there are other ways in which we could describe the situation, depending on the circumstances: 1. 'He does not *really* hate Q; he only sometimes acts as if he did', 2. 'He does not really hate Q; but he sometimes gets very annoyed with him', 3. 'He instinctively hates Q without realizing why he does; the truth of the matter is that he subconsciously believes that Q has evil designs on his mother, and that's why he hates him'.)

I have been maintaining that having some apprehension and making some evaluation are characteristic features of emotion-situations. Are sensations also characteristic features of them? They certainly exist in many cases of occurrent emotions, and a person with a dispositional emotion often experiences them too. But 1., there may be some 'calm passions' which do not normally include any such sensational element. It is not absolutely clear whether hope is an emotion or not, but if it is, it would seem to be one of these: there are not, I think, any characteristic hope-sensations. If P hopes that she will come today, he simply believes that she might come, and considers that her coming would be a good thing. He may also experience one or more sensations, but he need not; and even if he does, it is doubtful that they will be any part of his hope. Envy, too, seems to be an emotion for which there are no typical sensations.

And 2., even those emotions which do have characteristic sensations—such as fear and anger—sometimes exist without the sensations. For example, if the person's evaluation is strong enough and his reactions violent enough, it may be quite gratuitous to

insist that feelings are also present. If P comes upon Q just as Q is setting fire to P's house, and P rushes at him in a blind fury, it seems singularly inappropriate to insist that P must be having certain sensations. In fact P, in such circumstances, probably experiences no sensations of any kind, and yet he is undoubtedly extremely angry. Again, if a person's attention is too strongly diverted to other matters, he might have an emotion without having the sensations or feelings that usually go with that emotion. A young man, P, is being interviewed for an important job and he is extremely anxious to make a good impression. One of the interviewers, Q, makes an insulting remark to P, and thereafter an observer might detect an icy tone creeping into P's voice when he addresses Q, although there are no other signs of anger. The iciness is not intentional, however, and in fact P is so intent on following the conversation and on creating a good impression that he is not even aware of it; and he is certainly too engrossed to experience any feelings of anger. I think we might say, under these circumstances, that P was nevertheless angry with Q—although this is undoubtedly an odd case, as we should also have to add that he was unaware of it at the time.

From these examples it would seem that where 1. the existence of certain sensations is a characteristic feature of a given emotion, and 2. those sensations happen to be missing on a particular occasion, there must then on that occasion be some overt action or behaviour, or at least an inclination to overt action or behaviour, on the person's part if he is to have that emotion—i.e. have it in an occurrent sense. And this must surely be true, I think: for if a person neither has any anger-sensations, nor acts angrily, nor even has the slightest inclination to act angrily, there appears to be no sense whatever in which he is (occurrently) angry.

Hence it is seen that what holds for the elements of apprehension and evaluation is also true for the element of sensations: they are characteristic features of emotion-situations—although only for some emotions, not for all—not absolutely essential ones, so that there may be occasional emotion-situations which lack them.

The view of the emotions being defended here is easily able to handle the problems which wrecked the Traditional View, namely, those of explaining how emotions can have objects, how a person can have reasons for his emotions, and how an emotion can be criticized as warranted or unwarranted, justified or unjustified, reasonable or unreasonable and so on. On the present view, it is easily understandable how emotions can have objects; because according to it, emotion-situations consist in part of an element of apprehension and an element of evaluation, and these are paradigms of things that have objects. Thus, the emotion is directed

towards something in virtue of these constituent elements. I do not mean to suggest that there is no problem whatever as to how certain modes of apprehension (beliefs, for example) and certain sorts of evaluations have objects; but I do not think that they are insoluble, and it would anyway seem to constitute a solution to the problem of how emotions can have objects to show that this problem reduces to that of how such things as beliefs and modes of action have objects.

On the present view of the emotions, it is easy to explain how a person can have reasons for his emotion and how the emotion can be deemed warranted or unwarranted, reasonable or unreasonable and so on. An emotion-situation consists in part of some apprehension and of an evaluation, and one understands how a person can have reasons for these things. The emotion can be judged reasonable or unreasonable according to whether the apprehensions and evaluations themselves, and their supporting reasons, are so.

A great deal could be said concerning the various different, but related, ways in which emotions can be criticized, but I cannot undertake such a huge task here. I content myself simply with giving examples of some different ways in which a person's agent-directed emotion—anger, say—can be deemed unreasonable, corresponding to the characteristic elements of such an emotion that have been discussed in this section.

1. *General apprehension of the object* If a person is angry at the child who broke the vase, his anger is unreasonable if it should be obvious to any sensible observer that there is no such child, and that the vase was knocked over by the banging shutter. The anger is unreasonable in virtue of the person's unreasonable belief or assumption about the existence of the object of his anger.

2. *Specificatory apprehension of the object* It is unreasonable to be angry at a child for hurting a dog if it is obvious to any sensible observer that he is not hurting the dog. The anger is unreasonable in virtue of the person's specificatory belief which, in these circumstances, is unreasonable. In cases in which there is at least one reason which supports the apprehension, the anger can be unreasonable if the supporting reason is sufficiently bad. Thus it is unreasonable to be angry at a person for insulting you if your only reason for thinking he did so is the report of an obviously or notoriously unreliable person.

3. *Evaluation (a)* It is unreasonable to be angry at one's teenage daughter for wanting to go to a perfectly respectable dance. In this case, it is the evaluation which causes the emotion to be unreasonable: for it is unreasonable to consider that the girl's desire is bad or wicked.

4. *Evaluation (b)* It is sometimes unreasonable for a person to have

too high a degree or too great an intensity of anger. It is, for example, unreasonable for a man to get so angry with his son for disobeying him in some minor matter that he beats him into unconsciousness, or even so angry that he trembles all over and grows quite pale. Here, too, it is the evaluation which accounts for the unreasonableness: it is unreasonable to deem the son's action to be *that* bad.

A note in passing: a case could be made for the claim that when only the general or specific apprehension (or the reasons which support it) is at fault, the emotion itself, strictly speaking, is not unreasonable, and that only an unreasonable evaluation can result in the emotion's being so. There is something in this claim: in examples 1. and 2. above, it does at any rate seem more natural to upbraid the angry person by saying something of the form 'It is unreasonable to be angry at — when —' than it would be to say 'Your anger is unreasonable'; whereas in examples 3., especially, and 4., to a lesser degree, it would be entirely natural to say 'Your anger is quite unreasonable'.

I have been talking so far as though all emotions could be criticized in the reasonable/unreasonable dimension; but in fact there is at least one important emotion—love—of which this is not normally true. If Paul loves Suzy, there seems to be no clear sense in which his love might be called reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational and so on. A love can be unsuitable, dangerous, unfortunate, disastrous, unhealthy, a blessing and lots of other things, but not, in general, reasonable or unreasonable. To be sure, if a person loves an object that is wildly odd—if he loves, say, his cat (i.e. loves it as one person usually loves another) or his mother's shoes—then his love is 'sick' or psychotic and might therefore be called irrational; but within the vast range of cases in which one person loves another, it hardly seems possible to distinguish the reasonable ones from the unreasonable ones—the distinction seems not to apply at all. This strikes one at first as odd, for love and hate are supposed to be opposites, and hatreds can certainly be unreasonable, and very likely reasonable as well. This fact—that loves cannot ordinarily be criticized as reasonable or unreasonable—also appears to be embarrassing to the view of emotions being defended here; for if love, like the other emotions, involves evaluations, why should it not be criticizable in that way?

There is, however, a way of accounting for this otherwise puzzling fact within the framework of the present view of the emotions; this can be done by noting some distinctions among different sorts of evaluations involved in emotions of different kinds. The evaluations made by a man in love with a girl are such as these: he wants to be with her all the time, he wants her to be healthy and happy, he wants

been, there would be general agreement, on the part of disinterested observers, as to whether or not Q had done something *evil* against P, and if so, as to how bad, how serious, it was. This means that a man's hatred, unlike his love, can be deemed reasonable or unreasonable.

I want now to say something about the various uses of emotion words, for I consider it to be a major point in support of my thesis concerning the emotions that it explains the possibility of these uses.

We tend to have much too restricted a notion of the use of words in general, and of emotion words in particular. As Wittgenstein says, 'We think of the utterance of an emotion as though it were some artificial device to let others know that we have it.'<sup>3</sup> Certainly the Traditional View would have us think so. But in fact there are many occasions on which we use emotion words to perform jobs other than reporting our inward state. Consider, for example, the following first-person locutions: 'I am afraid that', 'I fear that', 'I am sorry to say that', 'I am ashamed to admit that', and 'I am embarrassed to report that'. One of the speech-acts a speaker performs in using these locutions is that of asserting whatever follows 'that'. But there is for our purposes a more important speech-act performed as well, namely that of indicating the speaker's attitude towards, or evaluation of, whatever is the object of the assertion. For example, if I say 'I am afraid that the men trapped in the mine are lost,' I assert (more or less cautiously, depending on the circumstances) that the men trapped in the mine are lost, and, in addition, I signal or indicate that I consider this to be an unfortunate state of affairs.<sup>4</sup> What I do not do is state that I am having certain sensations—e.g. a sinking sensation in my stomach or cold thrills along my spine: I may have no such sensations whatever, and still not be in the least hypocritical or deceptive in asserting what I do. If I believe that the trapped men are not lost, or if, believing them lost, I do not genuinely consider their plight to be an unfortunate thing, then I can be charged with dishonesty, hypocrisy or insincerity, but not if I have no sensations characteristic of being frightened.

This use of emotion words is at least partially explained by my thesis that an evaluation is one feature of having an emotion. Since part of being afraid (frightened) that something will happen is that one considers that thing to be bad or unfortunate, it is only to be expected that when a speaker says 'I am afraid that the men trapped in the mine are lost', he indicates that he considers this to be an unfortunate state of affairs.

In the examples of the use of emotion words just cited, the speech act of asserting what follows the 'that' is at least as important as the speaker's indicating his attitude towards, or evaluation of, whatever

here is that my thesis about emotions explains the possibility of these speech acts: because if an emotion includes an evaluational element, then one would expect emotion words to have these uses. For example, if to *be* angry with someone for having done something is, in part at least, to consider that his doing it was something bad, then we should expect that to *say* to the culprit that one is angry with him would be (at least in part) to voice or express this belief—i.e. to claim that his action was bad and thus to upbraid the hearer.

The foregoing account of utterances like 'I am very angry with you for doing that' is incomplete in a way which is not directly relevant to the purposes of this paper, but which should perhaps be remarked. Even in those cases in which this sentence is used to upbraid the hearer, it is normally used to do something else as well. A speaker can upbraid his hearer in many ways for having done something bad: for example, he might say 'That was a very naughty thing to do.' One difference between the use of this impersonal locution, in which there is no overt reference to the speaker, and the use of the personal 'I am very angry'-locution, is that in the latter the speaker not only upbraids the hearer but also indicates that he has taken offence at what the hearer did, and that he 'holds it against him'. Thus, a perfectly natural reply to the remark 'I am very angry with you for doing that' would be 'Don't hold it against me: I didn't mean any harm by it' or 'I didn't mean to offend (displease) you.' Similarly, 'I am not angry with you any more' is normally a remark of reconciliation, not a report of the cessation of anger feelings or sensations.

To conclude, I should like to mention an additional advantage of the general thesis about emotions that has been defended here: on this view, it becomes a little easier to understand how one's reason can control one's emotions. For one thing, we understand fairly well how reason can control evaluations and some kinds of apprehensions, e.g. beliefs, and these are, according to the present view, important constituents of emotion-situations. On this view, too, it is easy to see how emotions can vary in intensity with changes in one's knowledge or beliefs. For example, if I am at first angry at someone for having done something, and later learn that what he did was entirely justified, then I shall almost certainly no longer be angry with him. I cannot normally be angry with a person for doing something if I think that what he did was perfectly proper in every respect. Hence, a change in knowledge can, by itself, result in the restraint or the removal of an emotion, and on my thesis this is readily understandable. On the Traditional View, it is difficult to understand how reason or changes in one's beliefs or knowledge can have the slightest effect on an emotion.

Hume, who defends the Traditional View, does not flinch from its consequences on this point. He asserts that reason cannot cause, restrain or remove an emotion any more than it can do so with a pain, a tickle or an ache. He says: 'Reason is perfectly inert, and can never either prevent or produce any . . . affection' (*Treatise*, bk III, pt I, sect. 1, p. 458 of the Selby-Bigge edition). But this conclusion just shows once again how very wrong the Traditional View of the emotion is.

It seems to me that the fundamental mistake committed by the defenders of the Traditional View is this: confronted with the words 'anger', 'fear' and the rest, they ask, 'What do these words stand for? What exactly are anger and fear? What is their essence?' Narrowing down their attention further and further, like the closing of the aperture of a lens, they finally focus on the feelings or sensations and think they have found what they have been seeking. But their pleasure must be short-lived, for they are confronted at once with unanswerable questions: How can these things have objects? How can they be reasonable or unreasonable? They are like men who, in the search for the real artichoke, strip it of its leaves (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, sect. 164): whatever they end up with, it is not the real thing and it is not enough. What I have tried to do in this paper is to keep the entire emotion-situations in view and then to discover what the characteristic features of these situations are. To ask the question 'Yes, but are these features actually parts of the emotion itself or are they mere accompaniments of it?' is to go wrong from the start, as the Traditional View does: it is to assume that there is something which is the essential anger or fear and to which therefore these elements or features either belong or do not belong. I have tried to show that if we look at the total situations in which emotion words are applicable, the characteristic features of these situations show with abundant clarity how emotions can have objects and how they can be reasonable or unreasonable.

## Notes

- 1 Williams James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Macmillan, 1890, ii, 449 (author's italics).
- 2 Errol Bedford made this point against what I am calling the Traditional View in his article 'Emotions', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, lvii, p. 296f.
- 3 *The Blue and Brown Books*, Blackwell, 1958, p. 103.
- 4 Bedford makes essentially the same point (*op. cit.*, pp. 292-5). For an excellent account of this use of emotion words, see J. O. Urmson, 'Parenthetical verbs', *Mind*, lxi, 1952, pp. 480-96, reprinted in A. Flew (ed.), *Essays in Conceptual Analysis*, Macmillan, 1956. My own discussion here is greatly indebted to Urmson's.
- 5 Wittgenstein's view, for example, is that to say 'I am angry with you' is, in many cases, to engage in learned anger behaviour: it is like snarling or baring one's teeth. This is a use of emotion words which I do not consider in this paper. I think this view has much to recommend it, especially as applied to such utterances as 'I love you'. Wittgenstein also realizes that in certain contexts these same remarks may serve quite different functions, e.g. to describe one's inward state. (See *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, 1953, pp. 187-9.)



# **Education and reason**

part 3

# Liberal education and the nature of knowledge

22

P. H. Hirst

THE phrase 'liberal education' has today become something of a slogan which takes on different meanings according to its immediate context. It usually labels a form of education of which the author approves, but beyond that its meaning is often entirely negatively derived. Whatever else a liberal education is, it is *not* a vocational education, *not* an exclusively scientific education, or *not* a specialist education in any sense. The frequency with which the term is employed in this way certainly highlights the inadequacies of these other concepts and the need for a wider and, in the long run, *more worthwhile form of education*. But as long as the concept is merely negative in what it intimates, it has little more than debating value. Only when it is given explicit positive content can it be of use in the serious business of educational planning. It is my contention in this paper that whatever vagaries there have been in the use of the term, it is the appropriate label for a positive concept, that of an education based fairly and squarely on the nature of knowledge itself, a concept central to the discussion of education at any level.

## A Greek notion of liberal education

The fully developed Greek notion of liberal education was rooted in a number of related philosophical doctrines; first about the significance of knowledge for the mind, and secondly about the relationship between knowledge and reality. In the first category there was the doctrine that it is the peculiar and distinctive activity of the mind, because of its very nature, to pursue knowledge. The achievement of knowledge satisfies and fulfils the mind which thereby attains its own appropriate end. The pursuit of knowledge is thus the pursuit of the good of the mind and, therefore, an essential element in the good life. In addition, it was held that the achievement of knowledge is not only the attainment of the good of the mind itself, but also the chief means whereby the good life as a whole is to be found. *Man is more than pure mind, yet mind is his*

essential distinguishing characteristic, and it is in terms of knowledge that his whole life is rightly directed.

That knowledge is equal to its task was guaranteed by the second group of doctrines. These asserted that the mind, in the right use of reason, comes to know the essential nature of things and can apprehend what is ultimately real and immutable. Consequently, man no longer needs to live in terms of deceptive appearances and doubtful opinions and beliefs. All his experiences, life and thought can be given shape and perspective by what is finally true, by knowledge that corresponds to what is ultimately real. Further, the particular way in which reason is here represented as attaining knowledge results in a view of the whole of man's understanding as hierarchically structured in various levels. From the knowledge of mere particulars to that of pure being, all knowledge has its place in a comprehensive and harmonious scheme, the pattern of which is formed as knowledge is developed in apprehending reality in its many different manifestations.

From these doctrines there emerged the idea of liberal education as a process concerned simply and directly with the pursuit of knowledge. But the doctrines give to this general idea particular meaning and significance; for they lead to a clear definition of its scope and content, and to a clear justification for education in these terms. The definition is clear, because education is determined objectively in range, in structure and in content by the forms of knowledge itself and their harmonious, hierarchical interrelations. There is here no thought of defining education in terms of knowledge and skills that may be useful, or in terms of moral virtues and qualities of mind that may be considered desirable. The definition is stated strictly in terms of man's knowledge of what is the case. The development of the mind to which it leads, be it in skills, virtues or other characteristics, is thought to be necessarily its greatest good.

The justification that the doctrines lend to his concept of education is threefold. First, such an education is based on what is true and not on uncertain opinions and beliefs or temporary values. It therefore has a finality which no other form of education has. Secondly, knowledge itself being a distinctive human virtue, liberal education has a value for the person as the fulfilment of the mind, a value which has nothing to do with utilitarian or vocational considerations. Thirdly, because of the significance of knowledge in the determination of the good life as a whole, liberal education is essential to man's understanding of how he ought to live, both individually and socially.

Here, then, the Greeks attained the concept of an education that was 'liberal' not simply because it was the education of free men

### *Liberal education and the nature of knowledge*

rather than slaves, but also because they saw it as freeing the mind to function according to its true nature, freeing reason from error and illusion and *freeing man's conduct from wrong*. And ever since Greek times this idea of education has had its place. Sometimes it has been modified or extended in detail to accommodate within its *scheme new forms of knowledge*: for instance Christian doctrines and the various branches of modern science. Sometimes the concept has been misinterpreted: as in Renaissance humanism when classical learning was equated with liberal education. Sometimes it has been strongly opposed on philosophical grounds: as by Dewey and the pragmatists. Yet at crucial points in the history of education the concept has constantly reappeared. It is not hard to understand why this should be so.

Education, being a deliberate, purposeful activity directed to the development of individuals, necessarily involves considerations of value. Where are these values to be found? What is to be their content? How are they to be justified? They can be, and often are, values that reflect the interests of a minority group in the society. They may be religious, political or utilitarian in character. They are always open to debate and detailed criticism, and are always in need of particular justification. *Is there not perhaps a more ultimate basis for the values that should determine education, some more objective ground?* That final ground has, ever since the Greeks, been repeatedly located in man's conception of the diverse forms of knowledge he has achieved. And there has thus arisen the demand for an education whose definition and justification are based on the nature and significance of knowledge itself, and not on the predilections of pupils, the demands of society or the whims of politicians. Precisely this demand was behind the development by the Greeks of an education in the seven liberal arts, an introduction to and a pursuit of the forms of knowledge as they were then conceived. It was precisely this demand that prompted Newman and Arnold in the nineteenth century to call for an education that aimed at the cultivation and development of the mind in the full range of man's understanding. It is the same demand that today motivates such classical realists as Maritain and R. M. Hutchins.

### **A typical modern statement: The Harvard Report**

It may well be asked, however, whether those who do not hold the doctrines of metaphysical and epistemological realism can legitimately subscribe to a concept of education of this kind. Historically it seems to have had positive force only when presented in this particular philosophical framework. But historical association must

be distinguished from logical connexion and it is not by any means obvious that all the characteristic features of the concept are dependent on such philosophical realism. If the doctrines about mind, knowledge and reality mentioned at the beginning of this paper are regarded as at best too speculative a basis for educational planning, as well they may be, the possibility of an education defined and justified entirely in terms of the scope and character of knowledge needs re-examination. The significance of the concept originally came directly from the place the basic doctrines give to knowledge in a unified picture of the mind and its relation to reality. Knowledge is achieved when the mind attains its own satisfaction or good by corresponding to objective reality. A liberal education in the pursuit of knowledge is, therefore, seeking the development of the mind according to what is quite external to it, the structure and pattern of reality. But if once there is any serious questioning of this relationship between mind, knowledge and reality, the whole harmonious structure is liable to disintegrate. First there arise inevitably problems of definition. A liberal education defined in terms of knowledge alone is acceptable as long as knowledge is thought to be necessarily developing the mind in desirable ways, and hence promoting the good life. But if doubt is cast on these functions of knowledge, must not liberal education be redefined stating explicitly the qualities of mind and the moral virtues to which it is directed? And if knowledge is no longer seen as the understanding of reality but merely as the understanding of experience, what is to replace the harmonious, hierarchical scheme of knowledge that gave pattern and order to the education? Secondly there are equally serious problems of justification. For if knowledge is no longer thought to be rooted in some reality, or if its significance for the mind and the good life is questioned, what can be the justification for an education defined in terms of knowledge alone?

Difficulties of both kinds, but particularly those of definition, can be seen in the well-known Harvard Committee Report: *General Education in a Free Society*.<sup>1</sup> (In the Committee's terminology the aims of a 'liberal' and a 'general' education are identical.) Though certain of the doctrines that originally supported the concept of a liberal education are implicit in this work, the classical view of the significance of knowledge for the mind is considerably weakened, and the belief that in metaphysics man has knowledge of ultimate reality is ignored, if not rejected. The result is an ambiguous and unsatisfactory treatment of the problem of definition and a limited and debatable treatment of the question of justification. Some examination of the Report on both these scores, particularly the former, will serve to show that adequate definition and justification are not

only not dependent on the classical doctrines, but can in fact be based directly on an explication of the concepts of 'mind' and 'knowledge' and their relationship.

The Report attempts the definition of a liberal education in two distinct ways: in terms of the qualities of mind it ought to produce and the forms of knowledge with which it ought to be concerned. What the precise relationship is between these two is not clear. It is asserted that they are 'images of each other', yet that there is no escape from 'describing general education at one time looking to the good man in society and at another time as dictated by the nature of knowledge itself'.<sup>2</sup> Which of the forms of description is to be given pride of place soon emerges, however. First, three areas of knowledge are distinguished, primarily by their distinctive methods: the natural sciences, the humanities and social studies. But it is made plain that 'the cultivation of certain aptitudes and attitudes of mind' is being aimed at, the elements of knowledge being the means for developing these. Liberal education is therefore best understood in terms of the characteristics of mind to which it leads.

By characteristics we mean aims so important as to prescribe how general education should be carried out and which abilities ought to be sought above all others in every part of it. These abilities in our opinion are: to think effectively, to communicate thought, to make relevant judgments, to discriminate among values.<sup>3</sup>

The meaning of each of these four is elaborated at some length. Among the many things detailed of 'effective thinking' it is first said to be logical thinking of a kind that is applicable to such practical matters as deciding who to vote for and what wife to choose: it is the ability to extract universal truths from particular cases and to infer particulars from general laws: it is the ability to analyse a problem and to recombine the elements by the use of imagination. This thinking goes further than mere logic, however. It includes the relational thinking of everyday life, the ability to think at a level appropriate to a problem whatever its character. It includes too the imaginative thinking of the poet, the inventor and the revolutionary. 'Communication', though 'obviously inseparable from effective thinking', is said to involve another group of skills, those of speaking and listening, writing and reading. It includes certain moral qualities such as candour, it covers certain vital aspects of social and political life and even the high art of conversation. 'The making of relevant value judgments' involves 'the ability of the student to bring to bear the whole range of ideas upon the area of experience', it is the art of effectively relating theory to practice, of

abstractions to facts, of thought to action. Finally there is 'discrimination among values'. This includes the distinction of various kinds of value and their relative importance, an awareness of the values of character like fair play and self-control, intellectual values like the love of truth and aesthetic values like good taste, and, in addition, a commitment to such values in the conduct of life.<sup>4</sup>

As to how exactly these abilities come to be those developed by the three types of knowledge, little is said. It is noted that 'the three phases of effective thinking, logical, relational, and imaginative correspond roughly to the three divisions of learning, the natural sciences, the social studies, and the humanities, respectively'.<sup>5</sup> The difficult connexion between education in the making of value judgments and the formation of moral character is noted. Otherwise the remarks are of a general nature, emphasizing that these abilities must be consciously developed in all studies and generalized as far as possible.

This double, if one-sided, characterization of liberal education seems to me unsatisfactory and seriously misleading if what is said of the four abilities is examined more closely. In the first place, the notion that a liberal education can be directly characterized in terms of mental abilities and independently of fully specifying the forms of knowledge involved, is I think false. It is the result of a misunderstanding of the way in which mental abilities are in fact distinguishable. From what is said of 'effective thinking', it is perfectly plain that the phrase is being used as a label for mental activity which results in an achievement of some sort, an achievement that is, at least in principle, both publicly describable and publicly testable—the solving of a mathematical problem, responsibly deciding who to vote for, satisfactorily analysing a work of art. Indeed there can be effective thinking only when the outcome of mental activity can be recognized and judged by those who have the appropriate skills and knowledge, for otherwise the phrase has no significant application. Thus although the phrase labels a form of mental activity, and such mental processes may well be directly accessible only to the person whose processes they are, its description and evaluation must be in public terms occurring in public language. Terms which, like 'effective thinking', describe activities involving achievements of some sort, must have public criteria to mark them. But in that case, none of the four abilities can in fact be delineated except by means of their detailed public features. Such characterization is in fact forced on the Committee when they come to amplify what they mean. But their approach is simply illustrative, as if the abilities are directly intelligible in themselves, and the items and features of knowledge they give merely examples of areas where

the abilities can be seen. If the public terms and criteria are logically necessary to specifying what the abilities are, however, then no adequate account of liberal education in terms of these can be given without a full account in terms of the public features of the forms of knowledge with which it is concerned. Indeed the latter is logically prior and the former secondary and derivative.

In the second place, the use of broad, general terms for these abilities serves in fact to unify misleadingly quite disparate achievements. For the public criteria whereby the exercise of any one of these abilities is to be judged are not all of a piece. Those that under the banner of 'effective thinking' are appropriate in, say, aesthetic appreciation are, apart from certain very general considerations, inappropriate in, say, mathematical thinking. In each case the criteria are peculiar to the particular area of knowledge concerned. Similarly, for instance, 'communication' in the sciences has only certain very basic features in common with 'communication' in poetic terms. It is only when the abilities are fully divided out, as it were, into the various domains and we see what they refer to in public terms that it is at all clear what is involved in developing them. To talk of developing 'effective thinking' is like talking of developing 'successful games playing'. Plainly that unifying label is thoroughly misleading when what constitutes playing cricket has practically nothing in common with what constitutes playing tiddly-winks. The implications of the terms are not at all appreciated until what is wanted is given detailed specification. It is vitally important to realize the very real objective differences that there are in forms of knowledge, and therefore in our understanding of mental processes that are related to these. Maybe this unfortunate desire to use unifying concepts is a relic of the time when all forms of knowledge were thought to be similar, if not identical in logical structure and that the 'laws of logic' reflected the precise psychological operations involved in valid thinking. Be that as it may, the general terms used in the Report are liable both to blur essential distinctions and to direct the attention of educational planners into unprofitable descriptions of what they are after.

Thirdly, in spite of any protestations to the contrary, the impression is created by this terminology that it is possible to develop general unitary abilities of the stated kind. The extent to which this is true is a matter for empirical investigation into the transfer of training. Nevertheless such abilities must necessarily be characterized in terms of the public features of knowledge, and whatever general abilities there may be, the particular criteria for their application in diverse fields are vital to their significance for liberal education. But to think in these terms is to be in danger of looking



for transfer of skills where none is discernible. We must not assume that skill at tiddly-winks will get us very far at cricket, or that if the skills have much in common, as in say squash and tennis, then the rules for one activity will do as the rules for the other.

Failure to appreciate these points leads all too readily to programmes of education for which quite unwarranted claims are made. It is sometimes said, for instance, that the study of one major science can in itself provide the elements of a liberal education—that it can lead to the development of such abilities as effective thinking, communication, the making of relevant judgments, and even to some extent, discrimination among values. But this facile view is seen to be quite untenable if it is once understood how these abilities are defined, and how any one form of knowledge is related to them. Much more plausible and much more common is the attempt to relate directly the study of particular subjects to the development of particular unitary abilities. The Harvard Committee do this with subdivisions of 'effective thinking' when they suggest that, roughly speaking, logical thinking is developed by the sciences, relational thinking by social studies and imaginative thinking by the humanities. This, of course, could be said to be true by definition if logical thinking were taken to be just that kind of thinking that is developed by the study of the sciences. But such a straight and limited connexion is not at all what is indicated in the Report. The forms of thinking there are much more generalized. It follows then that logical, relational and imaginative thinking must be independently defined. Because of the vagueness of the terms it might appear that this would be simple enough. But in fact this very vagueness makes the task almost impossible, for any one of the three terms might, with considerable justice, be applied to almost any example of thinking. (And the appropriateness of using such a term as 'imaginative' to describe a distinct type of thinking rather than its manner or style is very debatable.) Even if this most serious difficulty were overcome somehow, there would remain the problem of establishing empirical evidence, for asserting both the existence of such an ability, and that a particular study leads to its development. Generally speaking there is little such evidence. What there is on transfer of training suggests that it occurs only where there is marked logical similarity in the elements studied.<sup>6</sup>

Finally the characterization of a liberal education in these terms is misleading owing to the tendency for the concept to be broadened so that it is concerned not only with the development of the mind that results from the pursuit of knowledge, but also with other aspects of personal development, particularly emotional and moral, that may or may not be judged desirable. This tendency can be

clearly seen in the Report's comments on the abilities of communication, making relevant judgments and discriminating among values. Stretching the edges of the concept in these ways leads to a much wider, more generalized notion of education. It then ceases to be one defined directly in terms of the pursuit of knowledge as liberal education originally was, and thus cannot be justified by justifying that pursuit. But this is surely to give up the concept in favour of another one that needs independent justification. The analysis of such a concept is beyond our present concern.

### **A reassertion and a reinterpretation**

On logical grounds, then, it would seem that a *consistent concept* of liberal education must be worked out fully in terms of the forms of knowledge. By these is meant, of course, not collections of information, but the complex ways of understanding experience which man has achieved, which are publicly specifiable and gained through learning. An education in these terms does indeed develop its related abilities and qualities of mind, for the mind will be characterized to a greater or lesser degree by the features of the understanding it seeks. Each form of knowledge, if it is to be acquired beyond a general and superficial level, involves the development of creative imagination, judgment, thinking, communicative skills, etc., in ways that are peculiar to itself as a way of understanding experience. To list these elements, picking them out, as it were, across the forms of knowledge of which they are part and in each of which they have a different stamp, draws attention to many features that a liberal education must of course include. But it draws attention to them at the expense of the differences among them as they occur in the different areas. And of itself such listing contributes nothing to the basic determination of what a liberal education is. To be told that it is the development of effective thinking is of no value until this is explicated in terms of the forms of knowledge which give it meaning: for example in terms of the solving of problems in Euclidean geometry or coming to understand the poems of John Donne. To be told instead that it is concerned with certain specified forms of knowledge, the essential characteristics of which are then detailed explicitly as far as possible, is to be given a clear understanding of the concept and one which is unambiguous as to the forms of thinking, judgment, imagination and communication it involves.

In his Gulbenkian Foundation Report, *Arts and Science Sides in the Sixth Form*, Mr A. D. C. Peterson comes considerably nearer than the Harvard Committee to the definition of a liberal education

(once more termed here a 'general education') by proceeding in just this fashion. Being concerned that this should not be worked out in terms of information, he shies away from any direct use of the term 'knowledge' and defines the concept modestly as one that 'develops the intellect in as many as possible of the main modes of thinking'.<sup>7</sup> These are then listed as the logical, the empirical, the moral and the aesthetic. The phrase 'modes of thinking', it is true, refers directly to forms of mental activity, and Mr Peterson's alternatives for it, 'modes of human experience', 'categories of mental experience' and (elsewhere) 'types of judgment', all look in the same direction. Yet the 'modes' are not different aspects of mind that cut across the forms that human knowledge takes, as the Harvard Report's 'abilities' are. They are, rather, four parallel forms of mental development. To complete this treatment so that there is no ambiguity, however, it must be made clear in a way that Mr Peterson does not make it clear, that the four forms can be distinguished, in the last analysis, only in terms of the public features that demarcate the areas of knowledge on which they stand. Logical, empirical, moral and aesthetic forms of understanding are distinguishable from each other only by their distinctive concepts and expressions and their criteria for distinguishing the true from the false, the good from the bad. If Mr Peterson's 'modes' are strictly explicated on the basis of these features of knowledge, then his concept of education becomes one concerned with the development of the mind as that is determined by certain forms of knowledge. This is to be in sight of a modern equivalent of the traditional conception of liberal education.

But the reassertion of this concept implies that there is once more the acceptance of some kind of 'harmony' between knowledge and the mind. This is, however, not now being maintained on metaphysical grounds. What is being suggested, rather, is that the 'harmony' is a matter of the logical relationship between the concept of 'mind' and the concept of 'knowledge', from which it follows that the achievement of knowledge is necessarily the development of mind—that is, the self-conscious rational mind of man—in its most fundamental aspect.

Whatever else is implied in the phrase, to have 'a rational mind' certainly implies experience structured under some form of conceptual scheme. The various manifestations of consciousness, in, for instance, different sense perceptions, different emotions or different elements of intellectual understanding, are intelligible only by virtue of the conceptual apparatus by which they are articulated. Further, whatever private forms of awareness there may be, it is by means of symbols, particularly in language, that conceptual articulation

becomes objectified, for the symbols give public embodiment to the concepts. The result of this is that men are able to come to understand both the external world and their own private states of mind in common ways, sharing the same conceptual *schema* by learning to use symbols in the same manner. The objectification of understanding is possible because commonly accepted criteria for using the terms are recognized even if these are never explicitly expressed. But further as the symbols derived from experience can be used to examine subsequent experience, assertions are possible which are testable as true or false, valid or invalid. There are thus also public criteria whereby certain forms of expression are assessable against experience. Whether the 'objects' concerned are themselves private to the individual like mental processes, or publicly accessible like temperature readings, there are here tests for the assertions which are themselves publicly agreed and accepted.

It is by the use of such tests that we have come to have the whole domain of knowledge. The formulating and testing of symbolic expressions has enabled man to probe his experience for ever more complex relations and for finer and finer distinctions, these being fixed and held for public sharing in the symbolic systems that have been evolved. But it is important to realize that this progressive attainment of a cognitive framework with public criteria has significance not merely for knowledge itself, for it is by its terms that the life of man in every particular is patterned and ordered. Without its structure all other forms of consciousness, including, for example, emotional experiences, or mental attitudes and beliefs, would seem to be unintelligible. For the analysis of them reveals that they lack independent intelligible structure of themselves. Essentially private though they may be in many or all of their aspects, their characteristic forms are explicable only by means of the publicly rooted conceptual organizations we have achieved. They can be understood only by means of the objective features with which they are associated, round which they come to be organized and built. The forms of knowledge are thus the basic articulations whereby the whole of experience has become intelligible to man, they are the fundamental achievement of mind.

Knowledge, however, must never be thought of merely as vast bodies of tested symbolic expressions. These are only the public aspects of the ways in which human experience has come to have shape. They are significant because they are themselves the objective elements round which the development of mind has taken place. To acquire knowledge is to become aware of experience as structured, organized and made meaningful in some quite specific way, and the varieties of human knowledge constitute the highly developed forms

in which man has found this possible. To acquire knowledge is to learn to see, to experience the world in a way otherwise unknown, and thereby come to have a mind in a fuller sense. It is not that the mind is some kind of organ or muscle with its own inbuilt forms of operation, which if somehow developed, naturally lead to different kinds of knowledge. It is not that the mind has predetermined patterns of functioning. Nor is it that the mind is an entity which suitably directed by knowledge comes to take on the pattern of, is conformed to, some external reality. It is rather that to have a mind basically involves coming to have experience articulated by means of various conceptual *schema*. It is only because man has over millennia objectified and progressively developed these that he has achieved the forms of human knowledge, and the possibility of the development of mind as we know it is open to us today.

A liberal education is, then, one that, determined in scope and content by knowledge itself, is thereby concerned with the development of mind. The concept is thus once more clearly and objectively defined in precisely the same way as the original concept. It is however no longer supported by epistemological and metaphysical doctrines that result in a hierarchical organization of the various forms of knowledge. The detailed working out of the education will therefore be markedly different in certain respects. The distinctions between the various forms of knowledge which will principally govern the scheme of education will now be based entirely on analyses of their particular conceptual, logical and methodological features. The comprehensive character of the education will of course remain, since this is essentially part of the definition of the concept, but any question of the harmonious organization of its various elements will depend on the relationships between them that are revealed by these analyses.

But if the concept is reasserted in these terms, what now of the question of its justification? The justification of a liberal education as supported by the doctrines of classical realism was based on the ultimacy of knowledge as ordered and determined by reality, and the significance of knowledge for the mind and for the good life. Having weakened these doctrines, the Harvard Committee's justification of their concept ignores the question of the relationship between knowledge and reality, and there is a specific rejection of the view that knowledge is in itself the good of the mind. They assert, however, the supreme significance of knowledge in the determination of all human activity, and supplement this, as is certainly necessary because of the extended nature of their concept, by general considerations of the desirability of their suggestions. When once more the concept is strictly confined so as to be determined by the forms

by noting a negative form of the same argument. From this point of view, to question the pursuit of any kind of rational knowledge is in the end self-defeating, for the questioning itself depends on accepting the very principles whose use is finally being called in question.

It is because it is based on these ultimate principles that characterize knowledge itself and not merely on lower level forms of justification that a liberal education is in a very real sense the ultimate form of education. In spite of the absence of any metaphysical doctrine about reality this idea of liberal education has a significance parallel to that of the original Greek concept. It is an education concerned directly with the development of the mind in rational knowledge, whatever form that freely takes. This parallels the original concept in that according to the doctrine of function liberal education was the freeing of the mind to achieve its own good in knowledge. In each case it is a form of education knowing no limits other than those necessarily imposed by the nature of rational knowledge and thereby itself developing in man the final court of appeal in all human affairs.

As here reformulated the concept has, again like the original, objectivity, though this is no longer backed by metaphysical realism. For it is a necessary feature of knowledge as such that there be public criteria whereby the true is distinguishable from the false, the good from the bad, the right from the wrong. It is the existence of these criteria which gives objectivity to knowledge; and this in its turn gives objectivity to the concept of liberal education. A parallel to another form of justification thus remains, and the concept continues to warrant its label as that of an education that frees the mind from error and illusion. Further, as the determination of the good life is now considered to be itself the pursuit of a particular form of rational knowledge, that in which what ought to be done is justified by the giving of reasons, this is seen as a necessary part of a liberal education. And as all other forms of knowledge contribute in their way to moral understanding, the concept as a whole is once more given a kind of justification in its importance for the moral life. But this justification, like that of objectivity, no longer has the distinct significance which it once had, for it is again simply a necessary consequence of what the pursuit of knowledge entails. Nevertheless, liberal education remains basic to the freeing of human conduct from wrong.

### **Certain basic philosophical considerations**

Having attempted a reinstatement of the concept without its original philosophical backing, what of the implications of this for the

4. The forms have developed particular techniques and skills for exploring experience and testing their distinctive expressions, for instance the techniques of the sciences and those of the various literary arts. The result has been the amassing of all the symbolically expressed knowledge that we now have in the arts and the sciences.

Though the various forms of knowledge are distinguishable in these ways it must not be assumed that all there is to them can be made clear and explicit by these means. All knowledge involves the use of symbols and the making of judgments in ways that cannot be expressed in words and can only be learnt in a tradition. The art of scientific investigation and the development of appropriate experimental tests, the forming of an historical explanation and the assessment of its truth, the appreciation of a poem: all of these activities are high arts that are not in themselves communicable simply by words. Acquiring knowledge of any form is therefore to a greater or less extent something that cannot be done simply by solitary study of the symbolic expressions of knowledge, it must be learnt from a master on the job. No doubt it is because the forms require particular training of this kind in distinct worlds of discourse, because they necessitate the development of high critical standards according to complex criteria, because they involve our coming to look at experience in particular ways, that we refer to them as disciplines. They are indeed disciplines that form the mind.

Yet the dividing lines that can be drawn between different disciplines by means of the four suggested distinguishing marks are neither clear enough nor sufficient for demarcating the whole world of modern knowledge as we know it. The central feature to which they point is that the major forms of knowledge, or disciplines, can each be distinguished by their dependence on some particular kind of test against experience for their distinctive expressions. On this ground alone however certain broad divisions are apparent. The sciences depend crucially on empirical experimental and observational tests, mathematics depends on deductive demonstrations from certain sets of axioms. Similarly moral knowledge and the arts involve distinct forms of critical tests though in these cases both what the tests are and the ways in which they are applied are only partially statable. (Some would in fact dispute the status of the arts as forms of knowledge for this very reason.) Because of their particular logical features it seems to me necessary to distinguish also as separate disciplines both historical and religious knowledge, and there is perhaps an equally good case, because of the nature of their empirical concepts, for regarding the human sciences separately from the physical sciences. But within these areas further dis-

tinctions must be made. These are usually the result of the grouping of knowledge round a number of related concepts, or round particular skills or techniques. The various sciences and the various arts can be demarcated within the larger units of which they are in varying degrees representative in their structure, by these means.

But three other important classifications of knowledge must in addition be recognized. First there are those organizations which are not themselves disciplines or subdivisions of any discipline. They are formed by building together round specific objects, or phenomena, or practical pursuits, knowledge that is characteristically rooted elsewhere in more than one discipline. It is not just that these organizations make use of several forms of knowledge, for after all the sciences use mathematics, the arts use historical knowledge and so on. Many of the disciplines borrow from each other. But these organizations are not concerned, as the disciplines are, to validate any one logically distinct form of expression. They are not concerned with developing a particular structuring of experience. They are held together simply by their subject matter, drawing on all forms of knowledge that can contribute to them. Geography, as the study of man in relation to his environment, is an example of a theoretical study of this kind, engineering an example of a practical nature. I see no reason why such organizations of knowledge, which I shall refer to as 'fields', should not be endlessly constructed according to particular theoretical or practical interests. Secondly, while moral knowledge is a distinct form, concerned with answering questions as to what ought to be done in practical affairs, no specialized subdivisions of this have been developed. In practical affairs, moral questions, because of their character, naturally arise alongside questions of fact and technique, so that there have been formed 'fields' of practical knowledge that include distinct moral elements within them, rather than the subdivisions of a particular discipline. Political, legal and educational theory are perhaps the clearest examples of fields where moral knowledge of a developed kind is to be found. Thirdly, there are certain second order forms of knowledge which are dependent for their existence on the other primary areas. On the one hand there are the essentially scientific studies of language and symbolism as in grammar and philology. On the other hand there are the logical and philosophical studies of meaning and justification. These would seem to constitute a distinct discipline by virtue of their particular concepts and criteria of judgment.

In summary, then, it is suggested that the forms of knowledge as we have them can be classified as follows:

1. Distinct disciplines or form of knowledge (subdivisible):



mathematics, physical sciences, human sciences, history, religion, literature and the fine arts, philosophy, morals.

2. Fields of knowledge: theoretical, practical (these may or may not include elements of moral knowledge).

It is the distinct disciplines that basically constitute the range of unique ways we have of understanding experience if to these is added the category of moral knowledge.

### **The planning and practical conduct of liberal education**

Turning now to the bearing of this discussion on the planning and conduct of a liberal education, certain very general comments about its characteristic features can be made though detailed treatment would involve psychological and other considerations that are quite beyond the scope of this paper.

In the first place, as liberal education is concerned with the comprehensive development of the mind in acquiring knowledge, it is aimed at achieving an understanding of experience in many different ways. This means the acquisition by critical training and discipline not only of facts but also of complex conceptual schemes and of the arts and techniques of different types of reasoning and judgment. Syllabuses and curricula cannot therefore be constructed simply in terms of information and isolated skills. They must be constructed so as to introduce pupils as far as possible into the interrelated aspects of each of the basic forms of knowledge, each of the several disciplines. And they must be constructed to cover at least in some measure the range of knowledge as a whole.

In a programme of liberal education that is based directly on the study of the specific disciplines, examples of each of the different areas must of course be chosen. Selection of this kind is not however simply an inevitable practical consequence of the vast growth of knowledge. It is equally in keeping with what a liberal education is aiming at. Though its aim is comprehensive it is not after the acquisition of encyclopaedic information. Nor is it after the specialist knowledge of the person fully trained in all the particular details of a branch of knowledge. Such a specialist can not only accurately employ the concepts, logic and criteria of a domain but also knows the skills and techniques involved in the pursuit of knowledge quite beyond the immediate areas of common human experience. Nor is liberal education concerned with the technician's knowledge of the detailed application of the disciplines in practical and theoretical fields. What is being sought is, first, sufficient immersion in the concepts, logic and criteria of the discipline for a person to come to know the distinctive way in which it 'works' by pursuing these in

particular cases; and then sufficient generalization of these over the whole range of the discipline so that his experience begins to be widely structured in this distinctive manner. It is this coming to look at things in a certain way that is being aimed at, not the ability to work out in minute particulars all the details that can in fact be discerned. It is the ability to recognize empirical assertions or aesthetic judgments for what they are, and to know the kind of considerations on which their validity will depend, that matters. Beyond this an outline of the major achievements in each area provides some grasp of the range and scope of experience that has thus become intelligible. Perhaps this kind of understanding is in fact most readily distinguishable in the literary arts as critical appreciation in contrast to the achievement of the creative writer or the literary hack. But the distinction is surely applicable to other forms of knowledge as well.

This is not to assert that 'critical appreciation' in any form of knowledge can be adequately achieved without some development of the understanding of the specialist or technician. Nor is it to imply that this understanding in the sciences, the arts or moral issues can be had without participation in many relevant creative and practical pursuits. The extent to which this is true will vary from discipline to discipline and is in fact in need of much investigation, particularly because of its importance for moral and aesthetic education. But it is to say that the aim of the study of a discipline in liberal education is not that of its study in a specialist or technical course. The first is concerned with developing a person's ways of understanding experience, the others are concerned with mastering the details of knowledge, how it is established, and the use of it in other enterprises, particularly those of a practical nature. It is of course perfectly possible for a course in physics, for example, to be devoted to a double purpose if it is deliberately so designed. It may provide both a specialist knowledge of the subject and at the same time a genuine introduction to the form of scientific knowledge. But the two purposes are quite distinct and there is no reason to suppose that by aiming at one the other can automatically be achieved as well. Yet it would seem to be true that some specialist study within a discipline, if it is at all typical of the discipline, is necessary to understanding the form of knowledge in any developed sense. The study of a discipline as part of liberal education, however, contributes practically nothing directly to any specialist study of it, though it does serve to put the specialism into a much wider context.

A liberal education approached directly in terms of the disciplines will thus be composed of the study of at least paradigm examples of all the various forms of knowledge. This study will be sufficiently

detailed and sustained to give genuine insight so that pupils come to think in these terms, using the concepts, logic and criteria accurately in the different domains. It will then include generalization of the particular examples used so as to show the range of understanding in the various forms. It will also include some indication of the relations between the forms where these overlap and their significance in the major fields of knowledge, particularly the practical fields, that have been developed. This is particularly important for moral education, as moral questions can frequently be solved only by calling on the widest possible range of human understanding. As there is in fact no developed discipline of moral knowledge, education in moral understanding must necessarily be approached in a rather different way. For if it is to cover more than everyday personal matters this has to be by the study of issues that occur in certain particular fields of knowledge. The major difficulty this presents will be referred to briefly later. The important point here is that though moral understanding has to be pursued in contexts where it is not the only dominant interest, the aim of its pursuit is precisely the same as for all other elements in a liberal education, the understanding of experience in a unique way. What is wanted (just as in the study of the disciplines *per se*) is, basically, the use of the appropriate concepts, logic and criteria, and the appreciation of the range of understanding in this form.

It is perhaps important to stress the fact that this education will be one in the forms of knowledge themselves and not merely a self-conscious philosophical treatment of their characteristics. Scientific and historical knowledge are wanted, not knowledge of the philosophy of science and the philosophy of history as substitutes. A liberal education can be planned only if distinctions in the forms of knowledge are clearly understood, and that is a philosophical matter. But the education itself is only partly in philosophy, and that is only possible when pupils have some grasp of the other disciplines themselves.

Precisely what sections of the various disciplines are best suited to the aims of liberal education cannot be gone into here. It is apparent that on philosophical grounds alone some branches of the sciences, for instance, would seem to be much more satisfactory as paradigms of scientific thinking than others. Many sections of physics are probably more comprehensive and clear in logical character, more typical of the well developed physical sciences than, say, botany. If so, they would, all other things being equal, serve better as an introduction to scientific knowledge. Perhaps in literature and the fine arts the paradigm principle is less easy to apply though probably many would favour a course in literature to any one other.

But whatever the discipline, in practice all other things are not in fact equal and decisions about the content of courses cannot be taken without careful regard to the abilities and interests of the students for whom they are designed.

Yet hovering round such decisions and questions of syllabus planning there is frequently found the belief that the inherent logical structure of a discipline, or a branch of a discipline necessarily determines exactly what and exactly how the subject is to be taught and learnt. The small amount of truth and the large amount of error in this belief can only be distinguished by clarifying what the logic of a subject is. It is not a series of intellectual steps that must be climbed in strict order. It is not a specific psychological channel along which the mind must travel if there is to be understanding. This is to confuse logical characteristics with psychological processes. The logic of a form of knowledge shows the meaningful and valid ways in which its terms and criteria are used. It constitutes the publicly accepted framework of knowledge. The psychological activities of the individual when concerned with this knowledge are not in general prescribed in any temporal order and the mind, as it were, plays freely within and around the framework. It is simply that the framework lays down the general formal relations of the concepts if there is to be knowledge. The logic as publicly expressed consists of the general and formal principles to which the terms must conform in knowledge. Coming to understand a form of knowledge involves coming to think in relations that satisfy the public criteria. How the mind plays round and within these is not itself being laid down at all; there is no dragooning of psychological processes, only a marking out of the territory in which the mind can wander more or less at will. Indeed understanding a form of knowledge is far more like coming to know a country than climbing a ladder. Some places in a territory may only be get-at-able by a single specified route and some forms of knowledge may have concepts and relations that cannot be understood without first understanding certain others. But that countries are explorable only in one way is in general false, and even in mathematics, the most strictly sequential form of knowledge we have, many ways of coming to know the territory are possible. The logic of a subject is relevant to what is being taught, for its patterns must be accepted as essential to the form of knowledge. But how those patterns are best discerned is a matter for empirical investigation.

School subjects in the disciplines as we at present have them are in no way sacrosanct on either logical or psychological grounds. They are necessarily selections from the forms of knowledge that we have and may or may not be good as introductions for the

purposes of liberal education. In most cases they have developed under a number of diverse influences. The historical growth of the subjects has sometimes dominated the programmes. The usefulness of certain elements, the demands of higher specialist education, certain general 'psychological' principles such as progressing from the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general, the concrete to the abstract, all these factors and many others have left their marks. This being so, many well established courses need to be critically re-examined both philosophically and psychologically before they can be accepted as suitable for liberal education. Superficially at least most of them would seem to be quite inappropriate for this purpose.

Though a liberal education is most usually approached directly in the study of various branches of the disciplines, I see no reason to think that this must necessarily be so. It is surely possible to construct programmes that are in the first place organized round certain fields of knowledge either theoretical or practical. The study of aspects of power, natural as well as social and political, might for instance be one element in such a scheme: or a regional study that introduces historical, geographical, industrial and social considerations: or a practical project of design and building involving the sciences, mathematics and visual arts. In this case, however, it must be recognized that the fields are chosen because together they can be used to develop understanding of all the various forms of knowledge, and explicit steps must be taken to see that this end is achieved. There will necessarily be the strongest tendency for liberal education to be lost sight of and for the fields to be pursued in their own right developing the techniques and skills which they need. These may be valuable and useful in many ways, and perhaps essential in many a person's whole education. (Certainly liberal education as is here being understood is only one part of the education a person ought to have, for it omits quite deliberately for instance specialist education, physical education and character training.) But a course in various fields of knowledge will not in fact be a liberal education unless that aim is kept absolutely clear and every opportunity is taken to lead to a fuller grasp of the disciplines. Again some fields of study will be better for this purpose than others but all will demand the highest skill from the teacher, who must be under no misapprehension as to what the object of the exercise really is. Yet it is difficult to see how this kind of approach can be fully adequate if it does not in the end lead to a certain amount of study of the distinct disciplines themselves. For whatever ground may have been covered indirectly, a satisfactory understanding of the characteristically distinct approaches of the different forms is

hardly possible without some direct gathering together of the elements of the disciplines that have been implicit in all that has been done.

Whatever the pattern of a liberal education in its later stages, it must not be forgotten that there is being presupposed a broad basic education in the common area of everyday knowledge where the various disciplines can be seen in *embryo* and from which they branch out as distinct units. In such a basic primary education, the ever-growing range of a child's experience and the increasing use of linguistic and symbolic forms lay the foundation for the various modes of understanding, scientific, historical, religious, moral and so on. Out of this general pool of knowledge the disciplines have slowly become ever more differentiated and it is this that the student must come to understand, not confusing the forms of knowledge but appreciating them for what they are in themselves, and recognizing their necessary limitations.

But is then the outcome of a liberal education to be simply the achievement of a series of discreet ways of understanding experience? In a very real sense yes, but in another sense not entirely. For one thing, we have as yet not begun to understand the complex interrelations of the different forms of knowledge themselves, for they do not only have unique features but common features too, and in addition one discipline often makes extensive use of the *achievements* of another. But we must also not forget that the various forms are firmly rooted in that common world of persons and things which we all share, and into this they take back in subtle as well as simple ways the understanding they have achieved. The outcome of a liberal education must therefore not be thought of as producing ever greater disintegration of the mind but rather the growth of ever clearer and finer distinctions in our experience. If the result is not some quasi-aesthetic unity of the mind neither is it in any sense chaos. Perhaps the most suggestive picture of the outcome is that used by Professor Michael Oakeshott, though for him it has more literal truth than is here intended. In this the various forms of knowledge are seen as voices in a conversation, a conversation to which they each contribute in a distinctive way. If taken *figuratively*, his words express more succinctly than mine can precisely what it seems to me a liberal education is and what its outcome will be.

As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the

course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Of course there is argument and inquiry and information, but wherever these are profitable they are to be recognized as passages in this conversation, and perhaps they are not the most captivating of the passages. . . . Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure. . . . Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation. And it is this conversation which, in the end, gives place and character to every human activity and utterance.<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

- 1 *General Education in a Free Society*, Report of the Harvard Committee, O.U.P., 1946.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 65-73.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 6 Precisely the same criticisms might be made of some remarks by Professor P. H. Nowell-Smith in his inaugural lecture, *Education in a University*, Leicester University Press, 1958, pp. 6-11. In these he suggests that the prime purpose of the study of literature, history and philosophy is that each develops one of the central powers of the mind—creative imagination, practical wisdom and logical thought. Once more we are up against the question of the definition of these 'powers' and if that problem can be solved, the question of sheer evidence for them and the way they can be developed.
- 7 *Arts and Science Sides in the Sixth Form*, Gulbenkian Foundation Report, Oxford University Department of Education, 1960, p. 15.
- 8 Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, Methuen, 1962, pp. 198-9.

# On teaching to be critical

23

J. Passmore

WHAT is it to teach a child to be critical, and how can we tell whether we have been successful in doing so? Is it a matter of imparting facts, of inculcating habits, of training in skills, of developing capacities, of forming the character, or something different from any of these?

Pretty clearly, it is *not* a matter of imparting facts. Of course a teacher can impart to his pupils a variety of facts about the practice of criticism—that it is vital to democracy, that it is essential to the development of science and so on. He can tell them stories about Socrates or about Galileo. Perhaps, even, imparting facts about criticism, or telling stories about famous representatives of the critical spirit, is a useful method of encouraging children to be critical. But at least this much is clear: imparting facts of this sort to children is not sufficient to make them critical, any more than talking to them about the importance of honesty in commercial relations or telling them stories about honest men is sufficient to make them honest. Being critical is not only logically but empirically dissociated from being in possession of certain facts about criticism.

Then is being critical a habit? This question does not admit of so straightforward an answer. For the word 'habit' is sometimes used in a very broad sense to refer to any type of regular behaviour acquired in the course of experience, whether it takes the form of regularly scratching one's head in moments of stress, using a tool intelligently or making good decisions. Thus, for example, in his chapter on 'habit' in *The Principles of Psychology* William James seems to count even what he calls 'the power of judging' as a habit.<sup>1</sup>

James also says, however, that 'habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed', and that 'in an habitual action, mere sensation is a sufficient guide'.<sup>2</sup> We can all cite examples of habits, thus defined. To take a simple instance of a habit learned at school, the child acquires the habit of translating 'merci' by 'thank you'. Although at first he has to think about what he is doing, eventually the appearance of the word 'merci' in a book—the 'mere sensation'—provokes the translation 'thank you'.



Consider now the case of the skilful translator, as distinct from the well-drilled schoolboy. The skilful translator will not automatically translate 'merci' by 'thank you'. Sometimes he will translate it by 'thanks' or by 'ta'. He retains a level of vigilance, of conscious attention, which is quite lacking in the person who acts merely out of habit. It is characteristic of a skilful person, a well-trained person, as distinct from somebody who has merely been drilled, that for him 'mere sensation' is *not* a sufficient guide to action.

Of course, there are habitual ingredients in any skill. The translator does not, for example, think about how to read: he responds automatically to 'merci' as a word, he does not pause to consider the possibility that it is simply a set of squiggles on paper. But what makes him a skilful translator is precisely that he does not respond automatically, without thought, to the 'mere sensation' of a French word. So acquiring a skill is not the same thing as acquiring a habit, although it is generally necessary first to acquire certain habits before we can acquire a skill.

James tells the story of an old soldier who was carrying his dinner home when a practical joker called out 'Attention!' The soldier at once stood to attention, at the cost of dropping his dinner. We can imagine someone who was so drilled that to any assertion he responded with 'I question that!', however inappropriate the response in relation to its association. Such a person might be said to have formed a habit of questioning, but he would certainly not have learnt to be critical. This case is, of course, an imaginary one, but there are real instances not so very dissimilar. A person can be drilled into uttering stock criticisms. He can be taught to say, whenever he sees a non-representational painting or hears jazz, 'That's decadent.' Or whenever he hears a certain type of philosophical view put forward, 'That's nineteenth-century materialism,' or 'That's old-fashioned rationalism.' Such a person has not been taught to be critical.

The process of drilling pupils in such stock responses can properly be described as *indoctrination*. It is quite preposterous to say, although it has been said, that 'children are indoctrinated with the multiplication table',<sup>3</sup> for exactly the same reason that it would be preposterous to say of anyone that 'his doctrine is that  $2 \times 2 = 4$ '. The old soldier in James's example had not been indoctrinated. He had simply been drilled. Indoctrination is a special form of drilling in which the pupil is drilled—e.g. by way of a catechism—in doctrines and in stock replies to stock objections to doctrine. But if indoctrination is a special kind of drill, it is nevertheless a kind of drill.

By drill a child can be taught the multiplication table, irregular

skill, then it ought to be the case that to master Black's *Critical Thinking* would be to master, or gain some degree of mastery over, that skill. Our line of reasoning suggests, however, that one can master Black's book without having learnt to be critical, even in a slight degree.

'Being critical' is, indeed, more like the sort of thing we call a 'character trait' than it is like a skill. To call a person 'critical' is to characterize him, to describe his nature, in a sense in which to describe him, simply, as 'capable of analysing certain kinds of fallacy' is not to describe his nature. It is a natural answer to the question 'What kind of person is he?' to reply 'Very critical', when it would not be a natural answer that the person in question is a skilful driver.

Skills, as Plato pointed out, are 'capabilities for opposites'. A driver can use his skill to put himself into, as well as to extricate himself from, dangerous positions. Similarly, an expert in the detection of fallacies can use his skill in order to conceal the fallacies in his own case, by drawing attention away from them, rather than in a disinterested attempt to arrive at the truth. It is one of Socrates' reasons for objecting to the Sophists that they taught their pupils precisely this sort of skill.

In contrast, the critical spirit, in the sense in which an educator is interested in encouraging it, cannot be misused. No doubt those who possess it may sometimes be led, as a result of their exercise of criticism, to abandon views, which are actually correct, as a just man can make a wrong decision, in virtue of being just, in a case where he would have made the right decision had he allowed partiality to sway him. (There are examples of this in Mr Allworthy's treatment of Tom Jones.) But this is quite different from the case where a judge uses the sort of skill he has acquired as a judge in order to pervert the course of justice. The skills of a judge, or the skills of a critic, can be used or misused; justice or the critical spirit can be neither used nor misused. And this is because neither being just nor being critical is a skill.

If it is true that to be critical is a character trait, we can easily understand why it is in practice difficult for teachers to teach their pupils to be critical. That sort of teaching which sets out to develop character traits relies to a considerable degree upon example and upon what is often called 'the atmosphere of the school'. Admittedly, whatever the character of school and teacher, an exceptional student—exceptional in any respect, with no implication in this description of moral superiority—may react against it. But, for example, a school in which teachers never deviate from a fixed syllabus, in which masters and students alike frown on every deviation from the conventional norm, is unlikely to encourage originality in its pupils,

### *On teaching to be critical*

although its products may be well-drilled and, within limits, highly skilled.

It is hard enough, the conditions of a school-life being what they are, for a teacher to set an example to his pupils in respect to such qualities as courtesy, justice, consideration. But to set an example of the critical spirit is still more difficult. In this instance difficulties arise not only from personal defects of the teacher—out of his fear, for example, that he may be unable to cope with a class in which the critical spirit has been aroused—but even from the very conditions of his employment.

Of course, the teacher himself will, inevitably, in the everyday course of his work, be critical—critical of his pupils, of the answers they give to his questions, of the work they present for his attention, of their behaviour, of the principles by which they govern their conduct. If by a 'critical person' we mean nothing more than a person who regularly draws attention to defects in what confronts him, a teacher cannot help being critical. And no doubt many of his pupils will in some degree imitate him. They will take over his critical standards and apply them to their own behaviour and to the behaviour of their fellow pupils.

The teacher, however, is ordinarily content to draw attention to the deviations of his pupils from fixed norms: their failure to work out their sums by an approved method, to conform to the school rules, to say the right things about Shakespeare, to adopt the accepted techniques of folding a filter-paper. He may be in all these respects highly critical of his pupils, he may devote himself zealously, even fanatically, to criticizing them at every point at which they deviate from accepted norms and he may arouse a similar zeal, a similar fanaticism, in his pupils without being in the slightest degree a critical person, in that sense of the word which now concerns us. Authoritarian systems of education very commonly produce pupils who are extremely critical, but only of those who do not fully adhere to the accepted beliefs, the accepted rules, the accepted modes of action.

the stereotype of the teacher—although ideas about what constitutes 'high standards' vary, of course, from society to society. Nor is the stereotype unjustified. The competent teacher will rightly demand from his pupils a high standard of performance in the skills he is teaching: he will be hostile to shoddiness, laziness, contented mediocrity. But in teaching his pupils skills at a high standard, or in encouraging them to examine critically their own performances and the performances of their fellow-pupils, the teacher is not, I have suggested, automatically engendering in them a critical spirit, as distinct from the capacity to be critical of certain types of specialized performance. For to exhibit a critical spirit one must be alert to the possibility that the established norms themselves ought to be rejected, that the rules ought to be changed, the criteria used in judging performances modified. Or perhaps even that the mode of performance ought not to take place at all.

Fagin, for example, taught his young thieves to be critical of their own performances and those of their fellow pickpockets; an authoritarian society may, through its teachers, teach its young to recognize and to be expert at criticizing heresy. But neither Fagin nor the authoritarian society is at all anxious to encourage in the young a critical attitude towards their own procedures—quite the contrary.

Teaching a child to be critical does, in contrast, involve encouraging him to look critically at the value of the performances in which he is taught to engage, as distinct from the level of achievement arrived at within such a performance. It is characteristic of societies in which criticism flourishes and develops that they abandon, under criticism, types of performance; they abandon, let us say, executions as distinct from seeking a higher level of skill in their executions. A critical person, in this sense, must possess initiative, independence, courage, imagination, of a kind which may be completely absent in, let us say, the skilful critic of the performance of a laboratory technician.

To encourage the critical spirit, as distinct from professional competence as a critic of techniques, a teacher has to develop in his pupils an enthusiasm for the give-and-take of critical discussion. Sometimes he tries to do this by setting aside special occasions for formal debate. But debates are more likely to develop forensic skills than to encourage a genuinely critical spirit. A child will be encouraged to be critical only if he finds that both he and his teacher can be at any time called upon to defend what they say—to produce, in relation to it, the relevant kind of ground. This is very different from being called upon, on a set occasion, to produce a case in favour of one side in a debate.

The difficulty with encouraging critical discussion is that the

### *On teaching to be critical*

teacher will almost certainly have many beliefs which he is not prepared to submit to criticism, and he will be enforcing many rules of which the same is true. These beliefs and these rules may be closely related to subjects which the pupils are particularly eager to discuss in critical terms—sex, for example, or religion and politics. If the teacher refuses to allow critical discussion on these questions, if he reacts to dissent with anger or shocked disapproval, he is unlikely to encourage a critical spirit in his pupils. If being critical consisted simply in the application of a skill then it could in principle be taught by teachers who never engaged in it except as a game or a defensive device, somewhat as a crack rifle shot who happened to be a pacifist might nevertheless be able to teach rifle-shooting to soldiers. But in fact being critical can be taught only by men who can themselves freely partake in critical discussion.

Secondly, even if the teacher is himself critical, there may be social pressure upon him not to admit that certain beliefs, certain practices, certain authorities, can properly be examined in a critical spirit. 'The values of rational critical inquiry,' A. C. MacIntyre has suggested, 'stand in the sharpest contrast to the prevailing social values.'<sup>4</sup> The word 'prevailing' may conceal an exaggeration. In no society, certainly, is rational critical enquiry the dominant social force; in every society, it meets with opposition. But there are differences between societies: our own society not only pays a certain lip-service to critical enquiry but in some measure values it. So the teacher who tries to encourage the critical spirit is not wholly isolated. But he will certainly find life less troublesome if he permits criticism only of what is generally admitted to be a proper subject for criticism—astrology but not Christianity, promiscuity but not monogamy.

A third difficulty arises from the fact that the teacher's training is very often not of a kind to encourage in him a willingness to participate in critical discussion. In some cases this is quite obvious. A Roman Catholic critic of the *collèges* of Quebec has written of the teachers in them in the following terms:<sup>5</sup>

In the ecclesiastical world, statements concerning learning and dogma from a higher authority are unquestionably accepted as the most potent of arguments. Priests are not really trained to discuss . . . They try to make their pupils reflections of themselves. They find it difficult not to put a brake on independence or initiative.

In many systems of public instruction, indeed, it is a principal object of teacher-training to turn out teachers who will firmly discourage free critical discussion. For in all authoritarian schools,

secular or ecclesiastical, the teacher counts himself successful when his pupils leave their school holding certain beliefs so powerful that no future experience could shake them; so committed to certain habits of behaviour that any modification of them will induce overwhelming feelings of guilt; so habitually deferential to authority that their unquestioning obedience can be counted upon. But even in democratic societies the emphasis in teacher-training may be such that the teacher is encouraged to think of his main tasks as consisting in the maintenance of silence in the classroom, 'getting through' the lesson laid down for the day, adherence to a syllabus, the preparation of his pupils for routinized examinations. The ideal teacher as turned out by such systems has been described thus:<sup>6</sup>

They concentrate their efforts on preparing their pupils for examinations . . . ; they teach precisely the subjects named in the curriculum, guiding themselves by the textbooks in use and attempting to smooth the path for the children; they obey cheerfully the instructions issued by superintendent and principal, in so far as they can understand them.

Such teachers are unlikely to encourage critical discussion among their pupils.

John Dewey's early educational writings were in large part directed against this conception of the teacher's task. The 'progressive schools', designed to give institutional expression to Dewey's educational ideas, took as their leading principle that neither teacher nor subject should be allowed to dominate the pupil. But Dewey himself was alarmed at the consequences:<sup>7</sup>

I am sure that you will appreciate what is meant when I say that many of the newer schools tend to make little or nothing of organized subject-matter of study; to proceed as if any form of direction and guidance by adults were an invasion of individual freedom, and as if the idea that education should be concerned with the present and future meant that acquaintance with the past has little or no role to play in education.

He went on in the same passage to describe the effects of such an education thus: 'Energy is dissipated, and a person becomes scatter-brained. Each [school] experience may be lively, vivid and "interesting" and yet their disconnectedness may artificially generate dispersive, disintegrated, centrifugal habits.' Other critics have drawn attention to the fact that in such schools concealed manipulation by the teacher often replaces direct authority; the children end up by thinking that they always wanted to do what the teacher has got them to want to do—the ideal of the demagogue.<sup>8</sup> Explicit

instructions are open to criticism, even in the most authoritarian of societies, by the more bold and adventurous spirits; secret manipulation is much harder to cope with.

But there is not the slightest reason why, rebelling against authoritarian schools which are wholly devoted to formal instruction and which inhibit the critical spirit, we should advocate the setting up of schools in which instruction has no place. An educated man—as distinct from a merely ‘cultivated’ man—must be, let us agree, independent, critical, capable of facing problems. But these qualities, while necessary, are not sufficient; many uneducated nineteenth-century radical workmen possessed them in abundance. To be educated one must be able to participate in the great human traditions of critico-creative thought: science, history, literature, philosophy, technology, and to participate in these traditions one must first be instructed to learn a discipline. One has to be ‘initiated’, to use Richard Peters’s language.<sup>9</sup>

I have introduced the phrase ‘critico-creative’ thinking, not through any fondness for it, but because ‘critical thinking’ may suggest nothing more than the capacity to think up objections. Critical thinking as it is exhibited in the great traditions conjoins imagination and criticism in a single form of thinking; in literature, science, history, philosophy or technology the free flow of the imagination is controlled by criticism and criticisms are transformed into a new way of looking at things. Not that either the free exercise of the imagination or the raising of objections is in itself to be despised; the first can be suggestive of new ideas, the second can show the need for them. But certainly education tries to develop the two in combination.<sup>10</sup> The educator is interested in encouraging critical discussion, as distinct from the mere raising of objections; and discussion is an exercise of the imagination.

How does instruction come into the story? Consider a relatively simple instance of critico-creative thinking, playing a game of chess. In order to play we must first be taught how the pieces are placed on the board; what move each piece can make; under what circumstances our opponent’s pieces can be moved from the board; that the king cannot be taken; that it is allowable to castle and so on. These rules we can be taught by an instructor or we can read them for ourselves in a book, but in either case they have simply to be learnt. No matter how clever we are we could never work them out for ourselves; presented with a chessboard and a set of pieces and told that they are used to play a game we could not possibly deduce how chess is played.

As well as rules, there are in any game useful routines, methods of coping with recurrent situations. Thus in chess there are certain

routine ways of playing the end-game. At a certain point, a player who knows these routines cannot lose, provided only that he is not careless. To distinguish these routines from rules, let us call them 'dodges'. They are not arbitrary; we can demonstrate that a player is certain to lose if he disregards them, or certain to win if he pays attention to them.<sup>11</sup> But we can be trained, instructed, in their use; we can make ourselves as good as the best player in the world at coping with certain end-game situations, in a sense in which we cannot be trained to be as good as the best player in the world at the middle-game. At some time, indeed, these 'dodges' had to be worked out by the exercise of critico-creative thinking, but they have now been reduced to routines. It would be the height of foolishness not to learn and to adopt them.

The great traditions are not games. But they are like games in a number of respects; they contain ingredients which are arbitrary, and they have generated dodges. On the first point, they depend, for example, on a capacity to read and write. Now it is a wholly arbitrary rule that the spoken word 'cat' should be represented in English by a particular series of squiggles, and in Chinese by a quite different arrangement of squiggles. No one, however clever, could, on listening to spoken Chinese, work out for himself how it was written down. In order to read and write Chinese we have simply to learn these quite arbitrary connexions between the spoken and the written language.<sup>12</sup> Languages differ: knowing how to spell a few Italian words we can work out how to spell any Italian word; knowing how to spell a few English words, we can work out how to spell a great many, but not all, other English words; in the case of Chinese there are very many ideograms which have to be separately learnt. But in every case the starting-point is arbitrary.

The student of chemistry, similarly, must learn a new language—what is signified by suffixes such as 'ic' and 'ous' and 'ate' in words like 'nitric' and 'nitrous' and 'nitrate'; how to read a symbol like ' $H_2O$ ' or a molecular diagram. Furthermore, as a result of the enormous success of previous scientists, students are in a position to employ a great many dodges—dodges for collecting gases, for determining what substances a solution contains, for calculating in what percentages it contains these substances. A reasonably intelligent student can be trained to use these dodges as well as the greatest of scientists. Scientists, as well, have made a great many discoveries on a grander scale—laws. It would be wholly absurd not to take steps to ensure that students are acquainted, anyhow, with some of these laws and can apply them to particular cases.

Indeed, although science is the most striking example of critico-creative thinking, it is often taught in such a way as scarcely at all to



exercise either the imaginative or the critical powers of the student. Depressingly enough, it might almost be regarded as an educational law that all subjects tend towards an instructional state. No subject, when introduced into a curriculum, ever fulfils the hopes that were held out for it as an educational instrument. And this is not an unfortunate accident, nor the result of a conspiracy. It arises out of the large instructional ingredient inherent in developed subjects and the conditions of the schoolroom, which favour the use of instructional methods.

The problem which confronts us can be put thus: inevitably, instruction plays a large part in our school systems. In no other way can students be helped to participate in the great traditions. They have to learn to accommodate themselves to, and to work with, arbitrary rules. They have to learn a variety of dodges. They have to bring themselves abreast of the knowledge that has already been acquired. Only thus can they put themselves into a position fruitfully to criticize, usefully to suggest alternatives. To try to make of one's whole schooling a training in problem-solving, as the 'progressivists' hoped to do, is to produce students who will be quite unprepared to cope with the principal problems within the great traditions. At what point, then, is there room for teaching the child to be critical?

One possible answer is that there is room for it only at a late stage in the schooling process and for a select group of pupils. This, so far as he permitted criticism at all, was Plato's answer. The majority of the citizens in an ideal state are to be instructed, taught to understand how to conform to rules, to apply broad principles to routine cases, but are not to be allowed to realize, even, that there are possible alternatives to those rules, that they can be subjected to criticism and replaced by different rules. Only a small élite is to come to a rational understanding of the rules, an understanding which would proceed by way of a criticism of established principles. For Socrates, in contrast, if we are to believe Plato's *Apology*, the 'unexamined life is not worth living'; instruction should be left to the Sophists; the educator is by his very nature a disturber of the peace.<sup>13</sup>

Something like the Platonic assumption is not uncommonly accepted in our own communities. Only at universities, it is presumed, can students be taught to be critical. It is, indeed, by no means universally admitted that even at the university level students ought to be encouraged to think critically about the accepted beliefs and the accepted institutions of their communities; such critical reflections, it is sometimes suggested, should be restricted to 'mature minds'.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, as the mass of instructible rules increases in volume, there is a growing tendency to postpone critical discussion,

the confronting of genuine problems, to post-graduate levels. University teachers, especially in scientific and professional subjects, will sometimes tell you that they 'haven't time' to encourage independent thinking, or even independent reading, in their students.<sup>15</sup> But many people would, however reluctantly, admit that independent, critical thinking is permissible in universities; at lower levels, they would nevertheless argue, it has no place.

For one thing, it is sometimes suggested, the majority of people cannot be educated, cannot participate in the work of facing, and solving, problems. Whether this suggestion is correct there is no way of deciding *a priori*. Very likely, indeed, there is no way of deciding it at all. Most of us could mention some field of activity in which we have learnt more or less effective procedures, without ever having advanced beyond that point.<sup>16</sup> But whether, given better teaching, we could have done so is a matter in which we can speak with much less confidence.

In fact, our views on this matter tend to be determined by our social attitudes. Those who believe that it is right and proper for all but a small minority to accept uncritically the dictates of established authorities are very willing to believe that most human beings are incapable of doing anything else. The democrat is, in contrast, committed to believing that the majority of people are capable of participating at some level in discussions which lead to a change of rules, i.e. that they are capable of thinking critically about, as distinct from simply obeying, a rule. But he is not, of course, committed to believing that all men are equally capable of participating in every discussion which involves the criticism of existing rules or of accepted hypotheses.

This point is fundamental. It is related to the fact that critical-creative thinking is not a subject, in the sense in which chemistry or technical drawing or history are subjects. It can be fostered, or it can be discouraged, as part of the teaching of any subject—even if some subjects provide more opportunities for doing so, at least at an early stage, than others.<sup>17</sup> A student may exhibit it as a translator, but not as a mathematician; as a landscape gardener but not as a historian. There is always the possibility that in a new subject, or a new area of an old subject, a child will develop previously unsuspected critical capacities. It may be the case, too—although I do not know of any decisive evidence on this point—that an attitude of mind thus engendered towards, say, accepted techniques in carpentry will in some degree carry over to other modes of activity.

Plato certainly thought so; if men are allowed in any respect to innovate—in even so harmless-seeming an activity as music—the whole structure of the State, on Plato's view, is in danger. Totali-

tarian states, operating on this same principle, are rigidly conservative in art, pure science, moral habits; there is good reason to believe that the Soviet attempt to license technical, but no other, innovations has broken down. It would be absurd to suggest that a man must either think critically about everything or about nothing. But it is not absurd to suggest that the critical attitude, once aroused, may extend beyond the particular group of problems which first provoked it. The educator's problem is to break down the tendency to suppose that what is established by authority must be either accepted *in toto* or else merely evaded—a tendency to which, very probably, the child's early training will have inclined him. Once the teacher has done that, once he has aroused a critical attitude to any authority, he has made a major step forward.

In any case, even if the teacher wholly fails in his attempt to encourage this or that child to be critical, it is a fatal policy to restrict the attempt to do so to the university level. If from early childhood a child is taught to do whatever he is told to do, if he is discouraged from asking questions, except in order to elicit information or receive instruction, he will completely flounder when he is suddenly called upon to make up his own mind, to face a situation where 'authorities' disagree. Observations made in Australia confirm what we would have expected: children from schools where the emphasis is on formal instruction find it extremely difficult to adjust to the more 'open' university conditions.<sup>18</sup>

How then reconcile the two requirements: the need for building up a body of knowledge, a set of habits, from which criticism can take its departure, and the need for introducing children from an early stage to the practice of critical discussion? The contrast, thus expressed, sounds absolute. But in fact the teacher has failed even as an instructor if he has done no more than inculcate a rigid habit or instil a fixed body of beliefs: his main object—if he knows his business at all—is to help the child to acquire a skill. By means of sheer drill a driving instructor can teach a pupil to sit in a stationary car and change gear, but this inculcation of mechanical habits is not itself instruction in driving; nor is it of the slightest use except as a preliminary stage in such instruction. Similarly, there is no point in a child's learning by heart the French equivalents of English names for parts of the body, or the eccentric behaviour of irregular verbs, except as part of the process of learning to speak, read or write the French language; no point in his learning the properties of the halogens unless this helps him to be, or—a more relevant consideration in the case of most children—to understand what it is like to be, a scientist.

The exercise of a skill, unlike the capacity to recite a list of all

the irregular verbs ending in 'oir', involves thinking—if not the criticism of rules, at least the application of them to circumstances which cannot be wholly predicted in advance. (This sort of thinking we might call 'intelligence' without too much disrespect to ordinary usage.) A French speaker never knows quite what French sentence he might be called upon to utter, whereas the child can know that the teacher will ask him to repeat words from a predetermined list. Furthermore, it is often in the course of exercising their skills that men discover the defects of accepted procedures. If the skill has been properly taught, in an atmosphere in which criticism is welcomed and the possibility of improving procedures emphasized, this discovery will not give rise to a sense of helplessness, or of anger against the teacher and a simple rejection of his authority; rather, it will stimulate the attempt to find an alternative procedure.

So far, then, as a school emphasizes, within the great traditions, the practice of skills rather than rote learning—the use of intelligence rather than the development of habits—it in some measure prepares the way for critico-creative thinking. A great deal depends on how a skill is taught. The crucial principle seems to be: wherever possible and as soon as possible, substitute problems for exercises. By a problem I mean a situation where the student cannot at once decide what rule to apply or how it applies, by an exercise a situation in which this is at once obvious. Thus, for example, a piece of English prose to translate into French is a set of problems involving that imaginative insight checked by facts characteristic of critico-creative thinking; a set of sentences for translation into French at the head of which the child is told that he is to use in each case the imperfect subjunctive—assuming the sentences otherwise contain no novelties—is an exercise. When a child has to ask himself whether a given set of relationships constitutes a permutation or a combination, he is faced with a problem; when he is asked to determine the number of possible permutations of a given set, with an exercise. Whether for a particular child a question is an exercise or a problem may, of course, be dependent on what he has learnt. Questions which look as if they present problems—e.g. 'Why does Hamlet attack Ophelia so fiercely?'—may turn out to be nothing more than an exercise designed to test whether the student can remember what he learnt in class; questions which would be exercises to the mathematics teacher, knowing what he knows, can be problems to the student.

Confronted by a problem, i.e. a situation in which we do not immediately see which way to turn, we can sometimes solve it by taking advice, by looking up a book. It would be absurd so to emphasize the independent tackling of problems as not to recognize

### *On teaching to be critical*

this fact. Indeed, no other skill the pupil is called upon to master at school is of such permanent value to him as learning when, and where, and how, to look things up. But it certainly cannot be said of most schools that they concentrate their attention on this skill rather than on encouraging pupils to work problems out for themselves; on the contrary, very few students leave our schools, or even our universities, with any real skill in 'information retrieval'.<sup>19</sup>

However, important though this skill is, we cannot settle all our problems by looking up the answer in a book. Problems fall into two broad classes; those to which the answer is known to the teacher but not to the pupil, and those to which the answer is known neither to teacher nor pupil. (One should add that the very existence of the problem is not, normally, known to the student. One of the educator's tasks is to make his students puzzled.) Most of the time the teacher will be putting before his pupils a problem to which in fact the answer is already known. His pupils come to be practised in the regular methods of tackling this class of problem, in the intelligent application of accepted procedures. But the teacher should certainly place special emphasis, so far as he can, on problems to which the answer is not known, or is a matter of controversy—only in that way can he prepare his pupils for the future.

In practice, of course, a great many teachers deliberately avoid all controversial issues. This is partly because they feel that they are not teaching if they make their pupils puzzled and then do not resolve their puzzlement for them; partly because so many of them, as representatives of authority, think it bad for their pupils to be unsettled—greatly underestimating the degree to which their experiences outside the school are in any case unsettling them. It is certainly *safer* and more comfortable to all concerned not to raise controversial issues. (It is surprising what a range of such issues there are, in any ordinary classroom.) The fact remains that unless his pupils leave school puzzled his teachers have failed as educators, however successful they may have been as instructors.

But at the same time a teacher will not want his pupils to be *merely* bewildered, although he will teach them that to be bewildered can be itself a virtue; he will hope to teach them in what way the questions which puzzle them ought to be discussed, what sort of evidence is relevant to their solution. Literature and history classes can be particularly valuable for the discussion of controversial issues. R. S. Peters has recently argued that 'disciplines like history and literature are debased and distorted if they are used consciously to inculcate "critical thinking"'.<sup>20</sup> What he has in mind, I think, is that the study of history and literature must not be thought of as a means to something else, e.g. to the acquisition of certain critical

skills. But the fact remains that history and literature classes provide the teacher with opportunities for encouraging critical discussion of a wide variety of human activities, as well as of literature and history themselves. No one would wish to see all literature and history lessons turned into such discussions. But it is equally a mistake to divorce the study of history and literature from the understanding of human relationships.<sup>21</sup>

Quite ordinary children will be aware, for example, that the plays of Shakespeare are in certain respects imperfect. Hearing from all quarters, and most conspicuously from their teachers, that Shakespeare was an overwhelming genius, they are likely to conclude either that genius is not for them, or that education is merely a racket, or merely shrugging their shoulders, that this is one more thing to be learnt as a lesson and repeated in an examination.<sup>22</sup> But there is not the slightest reason why pupils should not be allowed, or indeed encouraged, to do their worst in criticizing Shakespeare, why they should not be allowed to defend the view that his plays are inferior to any well-made television play. Only through critical discussion of this sort can the pupil be brought to understand why Shakespeare is in fact a dramatic genius, as distinct from parroting the view that he is. If he ends up unconvinced, no harm has been done—he was not, anyhow, convinced in the beginning, he merely acquiesced—and he should have learnt a great deal on the way, not only about Shakespeare, but also about the critical discussion of literature in general. It can properly be demanded of him, of course, that at all points he supports his opinions with evidence from the plays.

But what about the earlier stages in schooling, the less intelligent child? From a very early age he—or anyhow most children—can be taught what it is like to discuss a question critically. Most of us can recall two types of teachers: for the one any criticism of his own views, his own decisions, a school rule or a textbook principle was a moral misdemeanour, to be greeted with wrath and disciplinary measures; for the second teacher such criticisms, unless circumstances were unusually unfavourable, were made the occasion for a rational explanation, with the frank admission, whenever this was the case, that a particular rule was purely arbitrary, not defensible in itself, although perhaps defensible as a rule in the game.<sup>23</sup> (Compare 'Why should I wear a tie?' with 'Why shouldn't I be allowed to come in late to class?') Any teacher has to instruct, has to teach rules which are arbitrary, at least in the context in which he teaches them. The fundamental difference between the educator and the indoctrinator is that the indoctrinator treats all rules as 'inherent in the nature of things'—as not even *conceivably* bad rules.

## On teaching to be critical

What he takes to be fact, a principle, or presents as a person or work to be admired is deified as beyond the reach of rational criticism. The educator, on the contrary, welcomes criticisms and is prepared to admit that he does not always know the answers to them.

Critical discussion, at this level, of accepted rules can begin at a very early stage in the child's life; what happens later, as he begins to enter into the great traditions, is that the area of discussion widens and the difference between types of discussion more clearly emerge. Such critical discussion can be embarrassing to a teacher; he may himself not be convinced that a rule is a reasonable one or may never have asked himself how it can be justified. Anybody who sets out to teach his pupils to be critical must expect constantly to be embarrassed. He can also expect to be harassed, by his class, by his headmaster, by parents. If he gives up the idea of teaching his pupils to be critical and salves his conscience by training them in skills, this is not at all surprising. But he should at least be clear about what he is doing, and even more important, what he is *not* doing.

## Notes

- 1 *The Principles of Psychology*, New York, 1890, vol. 1, p. 127.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15.
- 3 See the passage quoted in R. F. Atkinson, 'Instruction and indoctrination', in R. D. Archambault, *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, p. 174, from J. S. Brubacher, *Eclectic Philosophy of Education*, New Jersey, 1951, p. 326: 'Children are indoctrinated with the multiplication table; they are indoctrinated with love of country; they are indoctrinated with the principles of chemistry and physics and mathematics and biology.'
- 4 'Against utilitarianism', in *Aims in Education*, ed. T. H. B. Hollins, Manchester University Press, 1964, p. 21.
- 5 Roch Duval, 'The Roman Catholic colleges of Quebec', *Year Book of Education*, Evans, 1957, p. 274.
- 6 G. Z. F. Bereday and J. A. Lauwerys, 'Philosophy and education', *Year Book of Education*, 1957. I should explain that in the text this is intended as a description of a conformist, not of an ideal, teacher. But in many quarters in Australia, at least, it would serve as a description of the ideal teacher.
- 7 *Experience and Education*, Ohio, 1938, quoted in Joe Park, *Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, Macmillan, 1962, 2nd ed., pp. 138-9.
- 8 Fred N. Kerlinger, 'The implications of the permissiveness doctrine in American education', in *Educational Theory*, April 1960, pp. 120-7, reprinted in H. W. Burns and C. J. Brauner, *Philosophy of Education*, New York, 1962, esp. pp. 384-5.
- 9 *Education as Initiation*, Evans, 1963.

- 10 On the problems set for the educator by the attempts to train the child to be critical without killing his imagination, see J. W. Getzels, 'Creative thinking, problem-solving, and instruction', *Sixty-third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Chicago, 1964, pp. 251-4. Does the Oxford tutorial system, for example, over-emphasize the need to be self-critical?
- 11 The chess example was suggested to me by P. H. Nowell-Smith's 'Purpose and intelligent action', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, supp. vol. xxxiv, pp. 103-4.
- 12 It is sometimes suggested that the resultant emphasis on rote learning in the early education of Chinese children helps to explain why China never developed a tradition of critical thinking.
- 13 See John Anderson, 'Socrates as an educator', *Studies in Empirical Philosophy*, Sydney, 1962.
- 14 See for example John Wild, 'Education and human society: A realistic view', in *Modern Philosophies and Education*, *Fifty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, p. 44.
- 15 See section 4.1, 'Teaching for independence', in S. W. Cohen, E. Roe, L. N. Short and J. A. Passmore, *Teaching in the Australian Universities*, Melbourne University Press, 1965. To say that one 'hasn't time' for an activity implies that what one is now doing is more valuable than that activity. But what could be more valuable than to teach students to think for themselves? Professional men who leave the universities 'abreast of the latest knowledge' but not knowing how to keep in touch with later developments are certainly not 'well-trained'.
- 16 For example, in mathematics. For a useful study of the problems confronting the educating of mathematicians see Ralph Beatley, 'Reason and rule in arithmetic and algebra', *Mathematics Teacher*, xlvii, no. 4, 1954, pp. 234-44, reprinted in Scheffler, *Philosophy and Education*, Boston, 1958.
- 17 This is an important consideration in constructing a curriculum. 'Although I will admit,' writes R. M. Hutchins, 'that in the hands of Socrates any subject can be made important . . . because any subject can lead to important questions, there was only one Socrates, and I know of none in any educational system today. We have to frame the course of study of American schools, colleges, and universities in the light of the capacity of ordinary teachers.' Quoted in *The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society*, New York, 1953, p. 13. This has as much application outside as inside America. We have to ask ourselves, too, what a subject is *actually like* at the level at which an ordinary student encounters it, as distinct from what it is like at the level of postgraduate research.
- 18 See for example F. J. Schonell, E. Roe and I. G. Meddleton, *Promise and Performance*, U.L.P., 1962, pp. 218-21.
- 19 See the Report on Science, Government and Information by the President's Science Advisory Committee, Washington, D. C., 10 January 1963.



- 20 '“Mental health” as an educational aim', in *Aims in Education*, op. cit., p. 88.
- 21 'It has never occurred to Sophia, nor to any of the other girls in the Latin class, to connect the words on the printed page with anything that ever really happened. Men marched, camps were struck, winter quarters were gone into; but to Sophia the Latin language did not concern men, camps, winter quarters and cavalry. It existed to provide Subjunctives and Past Participles and (Oh golly!) Gerunds.' Quoted in Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects*, O.U.P., 1964, p. 66, from Lionel Hale, *A Fleece of Lambs*, p. 38.
- 22 On the child's reaction to the fraudulent picture of life around him commonly presented in courses on 'social studies', see N. Frye (ed.), *Design for Learning*, University of Toronto Press, 1962. Compare John Locke, *The Conduct of the Understanding*, para. 12.
- 23 Compare R. M. Hare, 'Adolescents into adults', in *Aims in Education*, op. cit. The difference between the two types of teacher is obvious in practice, although not easy to describe in words.

SEVERAL of Plato's early dialogues raise the question 'Can virtue be taught?' It has not been fully answered yet, so let us look at the question again. One thing that very properly struck Socrates was this. Subjects like arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, wrestling, medicine and so on can be taught, and there exist professional teachers of them. For a person to become good at engineering, swimming or shooting he needs to be and he can be instructed by experts; and they will make him good at it, if he has the aptitude and the industry. But for a person to become a good man, as distinct from a good carpenter, a good navigator or a good astronomer, we do not seem to provide or require expert coaches. There are no technical colleges where honourableness is taught; there are no periods set aside on the school timetable for classes in *unselfishness*; Oxford and Cambridge colleges offer no scholarships in *ungreedi-*ness, frankness or humaneness. If virtue were teachable, we should expect there to exist experts to teach it and examiners to test progress in it. But such teachers and examiners do not exist. So it begins to look as if virtue cannot be taught. If a person is honest or considerate, perhaps he is so because he was born to be so, as he was born to be blue-eyed or snub-nosed, or as he is congenitally asthmatic.

Yet notoriously there is a difference between a bad upbringing and a good upbringing, and among what we credit to a good upbringing are things like frankness, command of temper and loyalty. These are good qualities of character, or—nasty word!—virtues, and if we think that they are due partly to upbringing, then we do not think that they are entirely congenital. No one has learned to be blue-eyed or short-sighted; but most people do seem to have in some degree learned self-control and kindness. None the less, neither the State nor the university nor the school appoints any specialist instructors from whom these things are learned. What is more, we ourselves, when we consider the matter, find the idea somewhat ridiculous that people should, even in Utopia, be appointed as specialist instructors in industriousness, self-denial and valour. We

feel vaguely that there is here nothing specialized for them to be specialists in; nothing that they could be experts in that we do not ourselves, all of us, know quite well without recourse to lectures and textbooks. We do speak of knowing the difference between right and wrong, but we do not think of this knowledge as belonging to a corpus of knowledge which scientists or scholars are forever advancing beyond our laymen's ken, as they are doing with astronomy, philology and mathematics.

In the Platonic dialogue that goes by his name Protagoras tells Socrates that he ought not to be puzzled by this. He adduces an interesting parallel. One of the most important things a child has to learn is to speak and understand his own mother tongue. Yet, although knowledge of Greek is not born in the Greek infant, as his blue eyes and his asthma are born in him, still there are in Greece no professional teachers of the Greek tongue; and this for the simple reason that at the start the child's own mother and father, and afterwards his companions and all the people that he meets, are his unprofessional teachers of conversational Greek. The child picks up his mother tongue perfectly adequately not from anyone in particular, and certainly not from any professional linguists, but from everyone in general. In the same way, Protagoras suggests, though we do indeed learn our standards of conduct, we do not have to learn them in any set lessons conducted by any appointed pundits; we learn them from Everyman in the home, in the streets, in the playground and in the market-place.

Protagoras' solution of the problem is rather an attractive one. 1. We do think that learning standards of conduct is something that takes place when we are pretty young, like learning our mother tongue. 2. We do think that standards of conduct are not esoteric things that only a few specialist researchers know anything about, but are exoteric things that nearly everyone knows nearly everything about. There is no gap here between amateur and expert and so there are no experts and no amateurs either, just as there are in England no experts or amateurs in colloquial English. 3. We are, however, quite ready to allow that just as there are in English occasional niceties and complexities, to master which we really do have to consult dictionaries, textbooks of grammar or phoneticians, so there are occasional moral issues which are so intricate or so unfamiliar that we really do need to take advice from some counsellor of wide experience, lively imagination and shrewd judgment. Soon we shall see that Protagoras' solution does not do the whole trick; but it has cleared the air a bit. It has shown us, by the analogy of learning our mother tongue, how we can continue to maintain that moral standards are not inborn but have to be learned, while

allowing that the learning of them does not require the existence of professors of probity, charity and patience.

Now for a different but connected point. One reason, and a bad reason, why the idea strikes us as ridiculous that there should exist expert tutors or crammers in fidelity, modesty or generosity is this. We all know and, unfortunately, are unable to forget that in some teaching, and particularly in much classroom teaching, the teacher is partly occupied in telling his students that this or that is the case. His students have to remember, if not to memorize, the things that he has said, and they have learned their lessons if, afterwards, they can say *viva voce* or write down the things that he told them. This is instructing by dictating. It is, disastrously, this brand of tuition that we all first think of when we think in the abstract about learning, lessons, teachers, etc. We forget, what we all know perfectly well, that there are lots and lots of things that can indeed be learned, and yet cannot be got by heart or regurgitated. To take a simple example. No child can ride a bicycle at first go. He has to learn how to balance, steer, propel and brake the machine. But he cannot learn these things simply by memorizing, however accurately, his father's verbal information about the requisite motions and co-ordinations. The father cannot just lecture his son into mastery of the bicycle. No, the boy has not just to be told what to do; he has to be shown out on the gravel what to do; he has to be made to do it; he has to try out everything time and time again, try it out in operations on the recalcitrant bicycle itself. He is trained or coached much more than he is told. The skills are inculcated in him by example and by exercise; they are not and could not be crammed into him by mere didactic talking. The same thing goes for cricket, rowing, carpentering, shooting, singing, swimming and flying. It also goes for a lot of more academic or intellectual things like calculating, translating, pronouncing, drawing, dissecting, reasoning and weighing evidence. No one learns to do such things even badly, and much less to do them well, unless, besides being told a few memorizable things, he is also put through lots of critically supervised exercises in the operations themselves. Acquisition of skills and competences comes, if at all, only with practice.

Another fact that we all know perfectly well from our own experience is that the very same thing holds true of conduct. It is not enough just to have memorized five moral lectures or sermons which admonish us to curb our greediness, malice or indolence. This memorization will not make us self-controlled, fair-minded or hard-working. What will help to make us self-controlled, fair-minded or hard-working are good examples set by others, and then ourselves

*Can virtue be taught?*

practising and failing, and practising again, and failing again, but not quite so soon and so on. In matters of morals, as in the skills and arts, we learn first by being shown by others, then by being trained by others, naturally with some worded homily, praise and rebuke, and lastly by being trained by ourselves. It was partly because we knew in our bones that standards of conduct are not things that can be imparted by lectures, but only inculcated by example, training and self-training, that we found the idea ridiculous that there ought to exist, if virtue is to be teachable, professors and encyclopedias of these standards of conduct, and lecture courses and examinations in them. If the supposed professors were to instruct by dictating, they would no more teach Tommy to keep his temper than his father would teach him, by mere dictating, how to bicycle or play the piano.

This point, that virtues, like skills, crafts and arts, can indeed be taught, not by lectures alone, but by example and critically supervised practice, is a big part of Aristotle's reply to Socrates. Roughly, he says to Socrates, 'You are wrong to be surprised that, if virtue is teachable, there should exist no specialist lecturers on standards of conduct. For standards of conduct, like skills, are not bits of theory or doctrines, and so are not learned by the memorization of things dictated. We learn them by exercise. The things that we have to do, when we have learned to do them, we learn to do by doing them.'

Keeping one's temper is, in this respect, like playing the piano. The wisest theorists in the world can lecture as eloquently as you please; but the clearest memories of their doctrines will not, by themselves, enable Tommy to play the piano. A few weeks of five-finger exercises on the piano itself are needed to start with. *Mutatis mutandis* ditto for control of temper. Learning doctrines by heart is one sort of learning; learning to do things is another sort of learning, and one which is generally not much assisted by learning doctrines by heart. Learning to keep one's temper and learning to play the piano belong to the second sort of learning. Socrates' puzzle partly stemmed from his assuming that learning to keep one's temper belonged to the learning of the first sort, instead of to the second sort.

Well then, does Aristotle's answer to Socrates, married with Protagoras' answer to Socrates, solve the whole problem? I do not think that it does, though it is an important contribution to the general theory of learning and teaching. It emancipates us from the supposition that all lessons are dictations, and that all learning is learning by heart. Repertoires are acquired and abilities are acquired. But abilities are not repertoires. However, Socrates could

still and should reply to a modern Aristotle in this way: 'I quite agree now that not all teaching is lecturing, and that teaching people to play the piano, bicycle, calculate, pronounce, design, translate, etc., largely consists in putting them through critically supervised training exercises in the operations themselves. Indeed, I grant that in real life even the most academic of teachers, namely tutors, demonstrators and professors in universities, spend much more of their time in teaching by training than they do in teaching by dictating—though the news of this fact does not seem to have reached the ears of the people who write to your *Times* newspaper about reforming your universities. But still my main puzzle remains. There do exist rowing coaches, swimming instructors, golf professionals, laboratory demonstrators and college tutors, who all teach people to do things chiefly by exercising them in the doing of these things. But again I ask: Where are the corresponding tutors, demonstrators and coaches in considerateness, toleration, pluck and candour? If flying, Latin prose composition, algebra and embroidery can be taught by critically supervised exercises, why cannot moral standards be inculcated in the same way? Or if they can, why do professional trainers in them not exist? Is it that moral standards are so elementary and so easy to pick up that they are left to be taught by any casual amateurs to children in their earliest years? Are they like skipping, snap, conversational English and hide-and-seek, which do not need, and unlike swimming, Latin prose and embroidery, which do need, expert instructors?'

We feel, I think, that Socrates' puzzle has still got something wrong with it. We do not really think that there should or could exist virtue professionals in the way in which there should and do exist golf professionals, swimming instructors and Latin prose tutors. But why not, if we continue to think that standards of conduct do have to be learned? What is the residual difference that we vaguely feel to exist between the acquisition of competence in snap, conversational English or algebra and the acquisition of conscientiousness?

Part of the difference is this, as both Plato and Aristotle clearly realized. A person may, by training, together with some native aptitude and zeal, become relatively good at something, e.g. relatively proficient in swimming, surveying or dissecting. But a proficiency can always be improperly as well as properly employed. The marksman who is able to hit the bull's-eye whenever or nearly whenever he wants is also able mutinously to miss it whenever he wants. The clever surgeon, who can repair internal lesions, has the skill necessary to cause fatal lesions, if the heirs to the patient's fortune can bribe him to do so. A bad, though well-meaning,

### *Can virtue be taught?*

engineer may by chance design a bridge that carries heavy traffic but breaks down in a gale. It takes a good, though unscrupulous, engineer deliberately to design a bridge that will carry heavy traffic and yet collapse in a gale. A man with the linguistic capacity to report clearly and coherently a complete budget of true tidings has the linguistic capacity to come out with a clear and coherent pack of lies if he wants to. What we object to about the surgeon who dexterously brings about the death of his patient is not any flaw in his surgical techniques, but the ends to which he exercises them. Technically we may admire an engineer who carefully designs an un-gale-proof bridge; morally we disapprove of him for wanting to sell his engineering skill to the ferry company whose trade will be ruined by a bridge. His techniques are good, but his motives are bad.

Virtues are not skills or proficiencies, since for any skill or proficiency it is always possible that a particular exercise of it be both technically first rate and unscrupulous. Beautiful specimens of carefully formed handwriting are to be found in the handiworks of forgers. Training a person in penmanship may make him successful as a forger, if he wants to make money dishonestly; it has no tendency by itself to make him not want to do this.

This brings out part of the underlying reason for our discomfort with the idea that there ought to exist experts to train us in standards of conduct, namely that having such standards of conduct is not being an expert in anything; so learning such standards of conduct is not acquiring expertness in anything. When, in writing a testimonial on behalf of a pupil, I have listed all the things that he is now highly or decently proficient at, I have still not said whether they would make it safe or dangerous to employ him, that is, whether he is scrupulous or unscrupulous, loyal or disloyal, straight or crooked. Being straight is not being an expert or even an amateur at anything; we cannot therefore teach people to be straight by just the kinds of teaching by which we train people to be proficient or competent at things. I do, of course, also say in my testimonial that 'he is a thoroughly loyal, modest and scrupulous man', but I do not say this while I am listing his abilities—or, of course, while I am listing his incompetences either.

age but with different aptitudes and different upbringings, one may be a lot more fluent, eloquent and coherent than the other. He is better than the other in colloquial English. But he may still be much worse than the other in his application of this proficiency. He may be a glib little liar, an eloquent little blabber of secrets, a coherent little carrier of malicious gossip. He has learned well how to tell things, but he has not learned what sorts of things he should and should not tell.

So a child can indeed pick up the main techniques of conversational English from the conversation of any English speakers with whom he associates; but this does not suffice for him to acquire standards of conduct, including standards of conversational conduct. Similarly, any competent player of snap can teach an ordinary child how to play snap; but it takes something quite different from competence at snap for a person to teach the child to prefer losing the game to winning it by cheating. So Protagoras is wrong if his analogy is meant to show that teaching a child not to want to cheat is all of a piece with teaching him how to play snap; or that teaching a child not to want to say spiteful things is all of a piece with teaching him how to say effectively whatever things, including spiteful things, he wants to say.

What, then, was the sort of teaching or training as a result of which young Jones, say, did grow up to be fairly or very plucky, considerate and trustworthy, if it was not just from sets of lecture notes, and also not just from the critically supervised practical exercises by which his various proficiencies were inculcated, tested and kept unrusty? As we have seen, these last may have made Jones a clever surgeon or engineer, but it was not these that made him not want his patient to die under his knife, or made him not want his bridge to collapse in a gale. So how was Jones taught or trained to want some sorts of things and not to want others; to aim at some sorts of goals and to shun others; to try to advance some sorts of causes and to despise others? If Jones is a conscientious surgeon, then his conscientiousness is no part of his dexterity, and vice versa; and the training that made him dexterous is not what made him care more for the welfare of his patient than for any other competing consideration that might be suggested to him. So how did he learn to care more for his patient's recovery than for any rival bonus? Unless we surrender and say that Jones was just born to be both asthmatic and conscientious, we seem now to be postulating a kind of learning by which he acquired not information and not proficiencies, but the caring for some sorts of things more than for others; a kind of schooling as a result of which, to put it in metaphor, Jones's heart came to be set on some things and against other things.



### *Can virtue be taught?*

He is now revolted by the suggestion that he or any other surgeon should for profit fudge an operation. But how can a person have been so instructed or trained that he now *feels* things that he would not otherwise have felt? Can there be lessons in feelings? Examinations in sentiments? Courses in attitudes? Drills or tests in motives?

We have now got Socrates' central question 'How, if at all, can virtue be taught?' separated off from questions about acquiring information and acquiring proficiencies; and the odd thing about this central question now is that in one way we all know the answer to it perfectly well. We remember how our parents reprimanded certain sorts of conduct in quite a different tone of voice from that in which they criticized or lamented our forgetfulness or our blunders. Some of the examples set us by our parents or by the heroes of our stories were underlined for us with a seriousness which was missing from the examples they set us that were merely technically enviable. The responsibilities given to us at school, if we had proved reliable, were of a different order from the tasks set merely to test us. We remember the growing, though inarticulate, distaste with which we witnessed the meanness of one schoolmate and the boastfulness of another. Above all, perhaps, we remember the total difference in gravity between the occasions when we were seriously punished and the occasions when we merely paid the routine penalties for infringing school—or family—regulations.

In these and countless affiliated ways we were, in a familiar sense of 'taught', taught to treat, and sincerely to treat, certain sorts of things as of overwhelming importance, and so, in the end, taught to care much more whether we had cheated or not than whether we had won the game or lost it; to care much more whether we were hurting the old dame's feelings than whether we were being badly bored at her little tea-party and so on. These are just familiar platitudes from the nursery and school.

But just to recite such platitudes as our answer to Socrates' central question, in its final shape, feels unsatisfactory because it seems to presuppose a general theoretical assumption which, in its nakedness, looks very suspect. The assumption is this: that we can properly be described as having learned or been taught standards of conduct when, under the influence of other people's examples, expressions, utterances, admonitions and disciplines, we too have come to care deeply about the things that they care deeply about. Facing this theoretical assumption, we are strongly tempted to object: 'Oh, but caring about something cannot properly be classed as something we have learned or been taught. Caring is just a special feeling that we have been conditioned to register on certain occasions. It is almost

of a piece with the seasickness felt by a bad traveller the moment he steps on to the still stationary ship. We should never say that his previous unhappy voyages had *taught* him to feel *mal de mer* on embarking on a stationary ship. Your now feeling shocked by what used to shock your father or headmaster is just another effect of suggestion.'

What are the sources of our reluctance to accept in theory an idea which we accept unhesitatingly in daily life, namely the idea that people can be properly said to learn to want things, learn to admire things, learn to care about things, learn to treat things seriously in word, deed and tone of voice, learn to be revolted by things, learn to respect, approve and back things, learn to scorn and oppose things and so on? Whence, too, our reluctance to allow that non-moral preferences and partialities, like tastes and hobbies, may be not merely acquired, but acquired by cultivation? That today's Bridge enthusiast learned not only to play, but also to enjoy playing the game? One source is this. In our abstract theorizing about human nature we are still in the archaic habit of treating ourselves and all other human beings as animated department stores, in which the intellect is one department, the will is another department and the feelings a third department. Our poor bodies, of course, are not departments but basement kitchens, sewers or at best shop windows. So we take it for granted that as the intellect is notoriously the one department into which lessons go, our wills and feelings are not themselves teachable. They cannot know anything; they cannot be more or less cultured or cultivated. Alarms and hostilities cannot themselves be silly or sensible. Somehow or other our intellects can indeed harness, drive, steer, flog, coax, goad and curb our wills and our feelings; but in themselves these two brainless faculties are in the civilized man just what they are in the savage; there is no schooling of them. They are just brutes, like the docile horse and the undocile horse in Plato's *Phaedrus*.

This department store yarn is sheer fairy-story. It answers to almost nothing in the actual composition of human nature. Try for a minute to think of some friend of yours in terms of it; try to describe his actions and reactions during some recent crisis in terms borrowed from it, and you will see that a description which fits the department store yarn cannot be made to apply to your friend, and a description which fits your friend's behaviour cannot be wrenched into tallying with the department store yarn. No novelist, dramatist or biographer nowadays dreams of depicting his heroine or even his villain in department store terms.

Consider one example of a perfectly familiar feeling, namely amusement at a joke. Is it true, first of all, that you can separate off

an allegation is to be educated up to the point at which we can be and therefore, feel indignant about it, and vice versa.

But nor is indignation reducible merely to the having of a retrospective thought together with the synchronous registering of an induced sentiment. The indignant man is ready or eager to act indignantly, to sign his name to letters of protest, to voice indignantly his indignation in conversation with other people and perhaps to subscribe money for the vindication of the injured person. If Jones is indignant, then there beats indignantly the unpartitioned heart of a thinker of thoughts, an active performer of concrete deeds, a participant in conversations, an experiencer of sentiments, and perhaps a writer, years afterwards, of memoirs. His indignation lives in the ways in which he thinks, acts, speaks, swears, glowers, reminisces and even, perhaps, goes off his food and loses sleep. To describe him as caring deeply about the matter is not to report merely the occurrence in him of some induced, introspectable perturbation; it is to report how he takes the matter, where his 'taking the matter' embraces his thoughts, actions, words and facial expressions; it embraces the things he puts on one side as momentarily unimportant, the resolutions that he makes to do everything possible to get justice done, his gradings of his colleagues as staunch or as spineless and so on. If we like still to treat him as a department store, his indignation is not proprietary to just one of his three departments. It works from his head office down through all his departments, even to his sewers.

So to have acquired a virtue, for example, to have learned to be fairly honourable or self-controlled or industrious or considerate, is not a matter of having become well informed about anything; and it is not a matter of having come to know how to do anything. Indeed, conscientiousness does not very comfortably wear the label of 'knowledge' at all, since it is to *be* honourable, and not only or primarily to be knowledgeable about or efficient at anything; or it is to *be* self-controlled and not just to be clear-sighted about anything; or it is to *be* considerate and not merely to recollect from time to time that other people sometimes need help. Where Socrates was at fault was, I think, that he assumed that if virtue can be learned, then here, as elsewhere, the learning terminates in knowing. But here the learning terminates in being so-and-so, and only derivatively from this in knowing so-and-so—in an improvement of one's heart, and only derivatively from this in an improvement of one's head as well. A person learns to be honest or learns not to be a cheat; only derivatively do we need to bother to say he then knows that honesty is a good thing, or realizes that cheating is wrong. Certainly

them, could not, even with a stretch, be classed as 'teachers'. Nor, in actual cricket matches, was Bradman out to teach the cricket strokes that his young devotees were none the less sedulously learning from him. He was out to win his matches. He was unintentionally being their model; but he was not being their mentor.

Indeed, in matters of morality as distinct from techniques, good examples had better not be set with an edifying purpose. For such a would-be improving exhibition of, say, indignation would be an insincere exhibition; the vehemence of the denunciation would be a parent's, a pedagogue's or a pastor's histrionics. The example authentically set would be that of edifyingly shamming indignation. So it would be less hazardous to reword Socrates' original question and ask not 'Can virtue be taught?' but 'Can virtue be learned?' and to think less about the tests and techniques of instruction and more about the tasks and puzzlements of growing up.

Socrates might complain at this stage that the so-called learning that is now being postulated is only part of the instinctive imitativeness of the young human being, of the ape and of the parrot. The child's acquisition of fairmindedness, say, is all of a piece with his acquisition of a Yorkshire accent. Both are mere examples of being conditioned. Now it is certainly true that, without conditioning, the child will acquire neither conversational English, nor manners, nor morals nor a Yorkshire accent. Initially instinctive aping is a *sine qua non* of learning. But aping does not suffice to get the child to the higher stage of making and following new remarks in English, of behaving politely in a new situation, or of making allowances in a competitive game for a handicapped newcomer. He now has to *think* like his elder brother or the hero of his adventure story, i.e. to think for himself. He has now to emulate their non-echoings. No longer does he merely respond instinctively. He can now be silly, sensible and even clever; rude, decorous and even courteous; unsporting or even sporting. Now some of his acts, words, expressions and perturbations are misclassified as 'responses'. They need a personal pronoun in their description.

There remains a question which this paper does not try to answer. What of the young disciples of Fagin? They live up to his standards; they dread his frowns; they learn from him to scorn mercy, unworldliness and good citizenship; they are, perhaps, as scandalized, revolted or indignant as he would be at exhibitions of scandalization, revulsion or indignation. Are what they have learned from Fagin virtues? We can think of some of our own acquaintances who speak of toughness as a virtue, and others who speak of it as a vice,

THE object of this paper is to attempt to clarify and evaluate a new aim in education. This aim is not present in educational activities as a new curricular objective. French in the primary school and psychology in the secondary school represent ways in which new aims can affect curricular objectives, but nothing like that is intended here. This new aim is to develop in children, over the whole period of their formal schooling, an important quality of character which can appropriately be called that of 'personal autonomy'.

There is no redundancy in insisting on the adjective in this phrase. Autonomy can intelligibly be attributed to many other sorts of things besides persons: to universities, to forms of discourse, to parts of the nervous system and even to certain economic investments. In fact, if the obviously Greek etymology of the word 'autonomy' is investigated, it emerges that it was first applied to the city. The city had *autonomia* when its citizens were free to live according to their own laws, as opposed to being under the rule of some conquering or imperial neighbour. But the adjective 'autonomous' was applied to persons as well as to cities. Antigone acted autonomously in resisting Creon's decree in favour of what she herself thought to be right. And the idea, if not the word, is abundantly present in the Socratic dialogues. The philosophical currency of the word, however, is no doubt due to Kant's employment of it. A man was autonomous, on Kant's view, if in his actions he bound himself by moral laws legislated by his own reason, as opposed to being governed by his inclinations. And no doubt Kant is the source for Piaget's employment of the term.

In contemporary education there is a host of terms circling round this central idea. Prominent among them are 'self-direction', 'self-activity', 'independence' and 'being a chooser'. But the idea is present not only in these commonly used terms of educational discussion, but also in a variety of corresponding innovations in educational practice. These include the recent emphasis on individualized learning, the stress on learning how to learn for oneself, and the widening of scope for individual choice at all ages. Over the

hundred years of State education since 1870 a clear contrast can be seen emerging between a school régime in which all the initiatives are the teacher's, while the children are passive, doing just as they are instructed and then waiting with arms folded to be told what to do next—between this and a régime in which many more initiatives have passed over to the children, who are now expected to be much more independent, self-directed or, in a word, autonomous. No doubt this shift in emphasis, which is still very recent indeed as a marked phenomenon, is connected with wider social changes. Adults are increasingly put in the position of being choosers, if not at work then at least in those widening areas of private life concerned with leisure and being a consumer. The demand for more participation in decision-making might also be mentioned.

Before turning to a closer examination of autonomy, it may be of some interest to point out a certain assumption that is made in these educational changes. This assumption is that all children should want, or under specifiable conditions would want, more autonomy. Individual differences, apparently, are not to be countenanced where this characteristic is concerned, any more than they are with, say, honesty or fairness. If children are dishonest, we do not simply adjust to that as a brute fact of individual difference, but try to explain and alter it. And so it is with individual differences in degree of autonomy. Thus the Plowden Report can confidently assert that sometimes the teacher must 'force independence' on children. On a slightly different plane, Erich Fromm<sup>1</sup> has drawn attention to the insecurity, anxiety and unhappiness which may result, and for some people under certain conditions apparently do result, from increased scope for autonomy. But these observations serve only to confirm the normative character of autonomy. As an ideal, or as part of some more comprehensive ideal of human excellence, it generates normative expectations as to what people ought or ought not to be like. References to individual differences, or to some consequent anxiety or unhappiness, serve only to invite enquiry as to how the ideal might more effectively be realized. The ideal is not invalidated by these actualities.

But what, precisely, is autonomy? Piaget writes<sup>2</sup> that 'autonomy follows upon heteronomy: the rule of a game appears to the child no longer as an external law, sacred in so far as it has been laid down by adults; but as the outcome of a free decision and worthy of respect in the measure that it has enlisted mutual consent'. Is it, then, that as a datable occurrence I must myself (*autos*) have consented to be bound by a rule (*nomos*)? Or must I myself have originated the rule? Commonly one finds at this point that writers are content to say that a rule must have been 'internalized'. What apparently is meant

by this is that a stage of development is reached at which it is no longer necessary for some authority to order or remind us what to do. But such 'internalizing' could be of very various kinds. We may still be obeying an authority present in fantasy, or simply be seeking to evade the personal discomfort of shame or guilt. We may be acting on an irrational but 'internal' compulsion. Interestingly, when David Riesman wrote in *The Lonely Crowd* of the 'inner-directed man', he distinguished this character from that of the autonomous man. 'Inner-directedness', on Riesman's account, looks like a special case of 'other-directedness'. What distinguishes it is simply that the influence of the 'other' has been internalized in early years in the form of compulsive drives. Peck and Havighurst's 'irrational-conscientious' type is the same man.<sup>3</sup> Direction appears to be that of the man himself, but really it is father, teacher or nanny who is speaking from out of the past.

Who, then, is the autonomous man? Is autonomy the same thing as freedom, or perhaps independence? How is it related to the notion of 'reason', whether in its theoretical or practical employments? And if the *nomos* by which the autonomous man governs himself must be in some sense 'his own', or must be 'internalized', then in what sense? Does autonomy in the end require 'criterionless choices' of an existentialist kind if we are to be truly independent in this respect? And finally, to draw a limit to the crowd of questions which autonomy raises, we may well ask what the special value of autonomy might be. Is it just something which has a certain usefulness at one stage in the evolution of our economic and social institutions, or has it perhaps some kind of intrinsic value?

A beginning in clarifying the concept of autonomy can perhaps best be made by examining its interrelations with freedom and with independence. Clearly all three of these are closely interrelated concepts, since in many contexts of discussion it would make no important change in sense if one were substituted for the other. Yet I shall argue that the three are distinguishable. Take freedom first. On a fairly widely accepted view, freedom is a negative notion. It consists in the *absence* of constraints or restraints relevant to what we do want or might want to do. When a teacher has a 'free period', he is unhindered by classroom duties from doing whatever else he might want to do in his professional capacity, though even in a free period he is *unfree* to do things that he might do in a purely private capacity. Again, when young children have a period of free activity, they are unrestricted by directions, instructions or set assignments in doing whatever they want to do, though here again they are unfree if what they want to do is to go home. These two examples

as the peer group, or 'pop culture' heroes. For instance, a youth just released from a borstal institution has, in an obvious sense, regained his freedom. But if his subsequent behaviour is in fact controlled by the expectations of the friends he now rejoins, then in what sense will he be autonomous? If he 'must' accompany them in stealing a car because otherwise he will be called 'chicken', then where is there any self-direction on his part in this state of freedom?

On the other hand, and with at least some children, it *might* be precisely a strict upbringing, with relatively little freedom, which does develop autonomy. It might do this by generating an inner rebellion which supplies the necessary dynamic for making it an ideal to stand on one's own feet. Alternatively, such an upbringing might make important contributions by developing skills and habits which can easily be turned to serve more autonomous purposes. But these are only possibilities which one may envisage. The general question of the best conditions for the development of autonomy is doubtless very largely an empirical one. It might well turn out that there was no general answer to it, since the answer depended on what freedoms we had in mind, for whom in particular, and when. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth while in the present climate of opinion to question the easy assumption that the conditions necessary for the exercise of autonomy will quite obviously be the same as the conditions under which it is best developed.

Just as freedoms are as various as the possible restraints on what we might want to do, so too the forms of independence are as various as the possible sources of what we might need, or depend upon. In general, we are independent of  $x$  for  $y$ , under certain conditions. For example, we are independent of the weather for our amusement if we like billiards. We are independent of paid employment for a living if we have a private source of income. We are independent of the headmaster for the syllabus we teach if we are ourselves responsible heads of department, and we are independent of the buses for transport if we have a car.

If this is correct, then certainly some kinds of independence do seem to be intimately connected with autonomy. An autonomous agent must be independent-minded. He must not have to depend on others for being told what he is to think or do. Again, he needs a motivational independence shown in not having to depend on others for constant encouragement or reassurance to overcome timidities, anxieties and fears. Some necessary kinds of independence, as with freedoms, will be matters of our external relations to people and things. For instance, the exercise of autonomy in a job may require independence of the formal approval of a superior in taking various measures.



Clearly, some kinds of independence, and more particularly those just referred to as aspects of independent-mindedness, seem more nearly to be constitutive of autonomy, while other kinds are just necessary external conditions of effective exercise. But can any of these forms of independence be quite simply identified with autonomy? Perhaps the same people would be picked out on either count, yet stressing independence emphasizes what a person is not, and it leaves somewhat obscure what positively it is in virtue of which he has these kinds of independence. Some more positive account of autonomy therefore seems to be required. But to give this, an exploration of its connexions with reason, or at least with the having of reasons, will be necessary.

A difficulty, however, in attempting a fuller characterization of personal autonomy is to know what it would be to have succeeded in such an attempt, since there is no clear guidance to be gained here from something called 'ordinary usage'. On the contrary, what one is doing is attempting to formulate a concept of something often still rather vague and inchoate, but nevertheless implicit in a variety of educational innovations and changes. The appropriate check on any suggested analysis would therefore seem to be in asking whether the analysis offered is indeed what people are implicitly making their aim, or one of their aims in education.

Briefly, what I want to suggest is this: a person is 'autonomous' to the degree that what he thinks and does cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind. This will, of course, be very much a matter of degree. And perhaps one should add that it is what a person thinks and does in the more important areas of his life that we should expect to be explained by reference to his own activity of mind. Clearly the notion of 'importance' here raises difficulties, but I should be strongly disinclined to attribute autonomy to anyone who was meekly submissive in both work and domestic life, though he asserted his independence in decisions about catching buses, the composition of the change to give or the order in which to put on his shoes. In some intuitive sense of 'importance', work and domestic life are normally very important, while the decisions just mentioned are normally trivial, or peripheral, or at most only derivatively important.

apply in every instance, since what a man thinks now, and how he acts now, may reflect an activity of mind engaged in hours, days or years previously, but without losing its force as the explanation.

By contrast, there are at least two possible sorts of heteronomy. Firstly, a man's thoughts and actions may be governed by other people. This would be so when, consciously or unconsciously, he is passive or submissive towards compulsion, conditioning, indoctrination, expectations or an authority unfounded on his own recognition of its entitlement. A second form of heteronomy would consist in a man's being governed by factors which are, in a sense, in himself, but which are nevertheless external to his activity of mind. Examples of this sort of heteronomy might include the various forms of psychosis and perhaps also neurosis, together with physiologically based addictions and derangements.

Autonomy, at least for human beings, cannot be absolute. For even if we suppose that a man's thought and action are indeed to be explained by reference to his own activity of mind, still this activity will itself have yet further explanations. These explanations will eventually refer beyond his consciousness to such factors as genetic inheritance and social conditioning. After all, I am myself arguing that in education we are precisely trying to *make* children autonomous, among other things. But these sorts of further explanation are available for every personality characteristic, if we are persistent enough in our enquiries into origins. And that being so, their availability does not disturb relative distinctions, such as that between autonomy and heteronomy, which we make *within* the field of what has such further genetic or environmental explanations as these. Similarly, any sense in which it is true that all human action is 'selfish' leaves undisturbed our ordinary distinction between selfish and unselfish action.

Personal autonomy, as here defined, is not just something for intellectual people who are concerned to form their own opinions on theoretical subjects. It can be manifested in a whole range of daily and practical activities: in buying things, in choice of job or in the way that a job is interpreted, in arriving at a particular sort of domestic arrangement, in the uses that are found for leisure and so on. Again, what we think and do need not be original, or first thought of or done by us. But if it is not original, then it must have been actively worked over and so incorporated in our own understanding or behaviour. It may have been learned from others, but it must have been made our own and not just acquiesced in or been merely lodged in our minds by drilling or repetition. Furthermore, there is no necessity that an autonomous person should be uncooperative, should refuse to follow any ordinary conventions or

should reject all forms of authority. There is no reason at all why any of these must be unacceptable, in advance of our knowing in which direction a person wishes to exercise his autonomy.

To draw together these points in an example, consider a person who demonstrates against the South African Springboks' rugby tour to Britain. Does this person act autonomously? Well of course, we cannot decide without knowing much more about how his action is to be explained. If he can perhaps convey to us sincerely held views on apartheid and on the value of the demonstration as a political action, and if he can perhaps distinguish this tour from tours from other countries whose régimes may also seem less than admirable but against whom he does not demonstrate, then so far I should be strongly inclined to regard this as an instance of autonomous action. If, however, the explanation is in terms of the rhetoric of some opinion leader, the mood of a crowd or an unconscious wish to fight authority in the form of the police, then we should be faced with relative heteronomy. No doubt in both cases there could be found further explanations, but that need not disturb the distinction.

Suppose that a person chose, decided, deliberated, planned and so on, but the considerations he bore in mind were false, or the criteria which made them considerations for him were inappropriate, what then? For instance, a man might determine for himself the early history of the world by consulting Genesis, or a man might plan some crime without reference to, or even in deliberate disregard of, any moral scruples. Would that still be autonomy? On the account given here, it would, or at least could, still be autonomy. If so, that shows truth and morality not to be among the conditions which must be present for there to be autonomy.

A teacher may face a dilemma here in employing so-called 'discovery methods'. For a child may self-directedly engage in some piece of enquiry, but come up with quite the wrong answer, or be quite mistaken in what he takes into account. The teacher might then feel pulled in two ways: should he correct the child in some way, out of respect for truth, or should his concern be more for strengthening the child's concept of himself as ready to engage in independent activity? Doubtless no general answer can be given, nor for that matter are there just these two alternatives.

To accept the present account, therefore, is to disagree with at least part of what Spinoza and Kant said about freedom and autonomy. In Spinoza's account of 'activity of mind', 'mind' is defined in terms of adequate ideas and these in turn are defined in terms of actual truth. But error does not necessarily seem to be a reason for denying autonomy to an agent or his decision. Even if God does not exist, a theologian could still present us with a fine

example of autonomy in thinking. Again, Kant wished to define autonomy in terms of acting on self-legislated moral laws, but surely a criminal could present a fine example of autonomy in action. However, what could much more plausibly be suggested is that autonomy is intimately connected with the notion of *reason*, even if not with actual truth, or with morality.

Before passing on to consider the connexions between autonomy and reason, however, there is a point concerning truth that may be of some interest. In the previous paragraph it was denied that the actual truth of a belief is a necessary condition of autonomous thought or action. It is necessary only that the belief should in an appropriate sense be a man's own. But in saying this perhaps we particularly have in mind the truth of beliefs about our situation, rather than about ourselves. But if we follow, as I am inclined to do, the line of argument presented by Spinoza, and more recently by Hampshire, to the effect that increase of self-knowledge is a necessary condition of autonomy, then in this case the beliefs that are held *must* be true. The line of argument here starts from the premise that the better we know our motives, wishes, purposes, typical reactions to others and so on, then the greater is the possibility of bringing our thought and action under conscious control. But if the explanation of our thought and action lies in what are at present unconscious motives, then only *true* beliefs about them will create such a possibility of conscious control. False beliefs will leave them unconsciously operative as before. With this particular class of beliefs, then, actual truth does seem to be a necessary condition of autonomy, though this is not universally so with beliefs about our external situation. With those, the most that could be shown is that such beliefs must be *thought* to be true, i.e. must indeed be beliefs. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the notion of 'reason' could be made intelligible without reference to truth as the intended point of reasoning.

The various activities of mind earlier referred to as constitutive of autonomy are all essentially linked to the idea of reason, or rather to the idea of having reasons for what one thinks and does. Choosing, deciding, deliberating, reflecting and so on are possible only because relevant considerations can be brought to bear in these activities. That is to say, features of the situation, real or imagined, are picked out as reasons. Implicitly or explicitly there will be criteria which pick out these features as the reasons which we have, or the considerations which we take into account. And these criteria will be as various as the sorts of thing about which we have to decide.

Someone with existentialist sympathies might at this point claim that we have autonomy only when the various criteria just men-

and its various conventions can be regarded as a stretch of social fact upon which I have yet to decide. 'Facts', on this view, will include anything which I choose to reconsider, including ordinary 'values'. But once again, if I am to reconsider whether to adhere to the 'game of promising', then there must be something else to which, for the moment, I give allegiance and by reference to which the question is to be settled. Autonomy neither does nor could require the stepping outside of all criteria to engage in some supposedly criterionless choosing.

The adequacy and appropriateness of the criteria to be employed will depend on the nature of the case, that is, on what it is that we have to decide upon. But if that is so, then the criteria appropriately to be employed will be independent of our particular wishes or purposes in the matter. In fact, the best reasons of all for a particular opinion or choice may be compelling ones. But if the criteria that one ought to employ are determined independently of one's wishes by the nature of the case, and if the reasons identified by reference to such criteria may even be compelling, where then is the autonomy? Is it not perhaps this sense that 'reason' can apparently be a threat to autonomy which leads Sartre onto his false trail?

Various replies might be made to this. First of all, it might be said that whatever may be true of the structure of such activities of mind as are governed by reason, it remains true that we have freedom of choice as to whether or not to engage in such activities, so that autonomy is retained at least to that extent. But this concession is less than might have been hoped for, which included autonomy within these activities as well as in initially choosing to engage in them. Furthermore, if this initial choice of activity is itself an exercise of autonomy, then it will in turn have to be explained by reference to our own activity of mind. This means in turn that it will have to be governed by appropriate criteria, therefore by something independent, and so the difficulty which this move was designed to circumvent in fact radically affects the proposed solution.

A second reply might be that, at least sometimes, 'thinking makes it so', instead of itself being governed by the independent nature of the case. For instance, whether I shall pass the examination may be determined, at least in part, by whether I think that I shall, and not just by independent factors discernible by reflection. But this would be only a very small territorial gain for autonomy, and in any case, I cannot believe that I shall pass the examination in order to do so. We do not believe anything deliberately, intentionally or on purpose.<sup>5</sup> To believe is to believe to be true, and whether or not what we believe to be true is true is independent of the will. My believing as I do may well be a factor in something's coming about,

but I do not believe in order that it may come about. I believe it because I think that I have reason to believe it is true, for example the evidence of the examination preparations that I have made, or the record of my past performances. So once again I am determining what to think or do by reference to independent criteria.

But although the adequacy and appropriateness of the criteria employed in autonomous activities of mind are determined by something independent of those activities, that does not mean that these criteria are, so to speak, self-active, and that we can be no more than the passive onlookers of self-propelled reasonings or unfolding implications. It is we who determine what to think or do, even if we determine it by reference to independent criteria. If I believe that  $p$ , and  $p$  logically necessitates  $q$ , believing that  $q$  is not therefore unavoidably necessitated, since we may be inconsistent in our actual thinking. An agent's autonomy, therefore, is not infringed by the fact that the criteria relevant to his activities of mind are so independently of any particular wishes of his in the matter. For it yet remains to the agent to employ those criteria and to govern his activity of mind by reference to them, and it is in this self-government that his autonomy lies. Reason is not, therefore, as an existentialist might have feared, a threat to autonomy.

At the outset of this paper it was argued that the development of personal autonomy was an aim of increasing prominence in education. But to set up something as an aim implies that a certain value is placed upon it. A final question which therefore clearly deserves to be asked concerns this value. What, then, is the value of autonomy? Is it, for instance, chiefly to be valued for other things which it makes possible, or has it some kind of value in itself?

There would indeed seem to be a paradox involved in any sceptical questioning of its value, for it is already presupposed that we think it important in the asking of any such sceptical questions. We are, in such asking, wanting to make up our own minds, at least on this point, and presumably also we want to be put in the position of being better able to make certain choices or decisions for ourselves. Thus an exercise of autonomy is involved in such questioning of it. But the paradox can easily be avoided if we ask the value of autonomy to *others*—to the children whom we propose to educate, for example. If the question is put in that way, then the issue must be squarely faced. It cannot be sidestepped by an *ad hominem* argument which is content to have shown a relative presupposition.

A utility value might be placed upon autonomy in relation to various economic roles in society, especially professional roles. It is a quality which must be possessed in relevant ways in all roles which

afford much independence of thought and action to their occupants. But to view autonomy purely instrumentally in this way is to take an employer's view of it. To the individual agent it is the job which is likely to have utility, and precisely in affording opportunities for the exercise of autonomy.

A slightly different sort of non-intrinsic value is illustrated where autonomy is extended to children because the adults concerned feel that they do not know what children should do or should be taught. In that circumstance, they may as well choose for themselves, it is thought. But something more positive than that needs to be said if autonomy is indeed to be set up as an aim, and not just as something that may or may not be allowed to develop by default.

In a very minimal sense, all human beings exercise autonomy. Men are rule-following animals, for instance in being language users. But the terms of any rule must include some which are general, and which therefore call for independent judgment as to whether this is a case, or this is the time, and so on. Even in acting under the strictest orders, some minimal active intelligence is called for. But of course, much more than this is implied in setting up the development of autonomy as an educational aim. More specifically, what is being aimed at is the development of a kind of person whose thought and action in important areas of his life are to be explained by reference to his own choices, decisions, reflections, deliberations—in short, his own activity of mind. And in a social world where it is important to locate responsibility, personal autonomy will prominently attract such ascriptions of responsibility to the individual agent.

Other things being equal, the exercise of such an autonomy will be a source of considerable satisfaction. The accomplishment of what we want or intend, under the description embodied in the intention, is necessarily a satisfaction, and our satisfaction is the greater the more there is of what we intend in what we accomplish. Empirical substantiation of this is abundantly available in human action from the earliest years. Even the youngest children enjoy 'doing it for themselves' and resent being 'bossed'. They want to be fully present in their actions as agents, rather than to be simply the executors of the will of others. As well as feeling satisfaction in the exercise of autonomy, there is also a pride, which is an emotion characteristically felt towards something which can be seen as an accomplishment of our own. Sometimes, of course, the accomplishment is only in an extended sense 'our own', through some process of identification, but this is not so where autonomy is concerned.

A person could not be to any marked degree autonomous without this being an important part of his self-concept. As such it will be an

important part of his dignity, or sense of personal worth, and its exercise will be claimed as a right to be respected by others. What this amounts to is more easily seen in actual examples than justified in general terms. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the notion of justification is in place at all here. Rather is it the case that other things are justified or not by reference to autonomy. Examples of it, however, could be extensively described and our understanding invited. But the indignity of a lack of, or deprivation of, autonomy is likely to be more sharply felt. This lack of dignity may be felt in the incapacity of an old person to determine even his own bodily movements, or in the refusal of a dominating parent or guardian to allow a young person choice in such important areas of his life as job, education or marriage. We may feel it in what Locke described as being subject to the unknown, inconstant arbitrary will of another man—something which the staff of a school may feel towards a headmaster, as well as something which the governed may feel towards their government.

But however we may value autonomy, and however important a part of a person's dignity it may be, it is clearly not the only thing that matters, as was made evident in commenting on Spinoza and Kant in connexion with truth and morality. Without morality, for instance, the more autonomous an agent is the worse he is likely to be. Great criminals are markedly autonomous men. Again, without respect for truth the attempted exercise of autonomy is likely to lead constantly into frustration and failure, since the world is then not as we think it to be. The rise of autonomy to prominence in education certainly does not mark the eclipse of such other values as those of morality and truth. Acceptable processes in education always have a variety of claims to satisfy.

In conclusion, then, what I have broadly been suggesting is as follows. A person is autonomous to the degree, and it is very much a matter of degree, that what he thinks and does, at least in important areas of his life, are determined by himself. That is to say, it cannot be explained why these are his beliefs and actions without referring to his own activity of mind. This determination of what one is to think and do is made possible by the bringing to bear of relevant considerations in such activities of mind as those of choosing, deciding, deliberating, reflecting, planning and judging. Autonomy is thus possible not only in the philosophically fashionable field of morals, where many writers do indeed speak of rules or a code of one's own, but in any field whatsoever where a person can have his reasons—in political judgments, consumer spending, planning a holiday, choosing or shaping a job, appraising the suggestions or



expectations directed towards us by others, forming an aesthetic or scientific opinion, deciding whether we believe in God, determining our stance in relation to the acts of various sorts of authority and so on. Personal autonomy is not just part of morality, or solely a condition of moral 'authenticity'. It is a much more pervasive personal ideal. And it is positively valued as an ideal not just for its utility in relation to various role performances, or because of the paradox involved in asking oneself whether it really is of value, but for the satisfactions of exercising this kind of agency and the dignity which it is felt to accord to the agent.

To pursue such an ideal as an educational aim of course requires a knowledge of the methods, curricula and patterns of organization which will best promote it. And as always at this point, a philosopher must recognize the interdisciplinary character of any enquiry into such questions of teaching procedure. Certainly there is a wide field here for psychological and sociological commentary, for instance on different child-rearing practices as causes, on typical developmental sequences which lead towards autonomy as their result, or on the social class factors operative in the forms of language with which a child is addressed. We may expect researches into these broad areas to increase as the educational aim is more clearly conceived and its importance is more explicitly recognized. We may also expect some surprises. For example, it was argued earlier that we cannot just automatically assume that an analysis of the conditions necessary for the exercise of autonomy will thereby also reveal the conditions necessary for the development of the corresponding type of character. These two sets of conditions may or may not be the same, or may vary in their coincidence with different natures.

But a good argument can, I think, be put up for choosing a certain group of curricular objectives, if autonomy is valued.<sup>6</sup> Such an argument would advocate developing, to whatever degree might be possible in given circumstances, various basic forms of understanding, distinguished from each other along the lines indicated by Professor P. H. Hirst.<sup>7</sup> These forms of understanding would be important for autonomy, and even partially constitutive of it, in at least two ways. First, in terms of content they contribute much to the background perspective from which choices, decisions, opinions and so on are made or formed in our society. Probably the extent to which scientific, mathematical, historical, aesthetic and ethical considerations supply the content and context of much that we determine would become fully apparent only if we made comparisons at an anthropological level with life in other cultures. Secondly, these 'basic forms' supply the general criteria in terms of which the validity of various claims is to be assessed. If those claims are to be

assessed for oneself, or the authority of others to make such claims is to be assessed, then these criteria will provide the relevant logical backbone to such autonomy. To be more particular, something of all this can already be seen in modern developments in mathematics teaching. This aims to convey mathematical knowledge, certainly, but it also aims to convey this knowledge in such a way as to develop, at least embryonically, a degree of mathematical autonomy in a child. This autonomy is built round his operational knowledge of the relevant criteria of validity for mathematical claims, and hence the procedures for checking their validity.

An important contribution towards the development of autonomy might be made through self-knowledge. But the degree of importance of this sort of knowledge for autonomy is probably matched only by its traditional degree of neglect in curricular arrangements. No doubt one reason for this neglect is that uniformity of preparation by teachers is much less possible here than it is with, the Battle of Waterloo, simultaneous equations or a study of convex mirrors. John and Mary need to know much about themselves that no one else needs to know, and furthermore, what Derek and Janet in turn need to know about themselves may be different again. Common factors are provided by the sorts of recurrent social interaction into which they are likely to enter, but even so their reactions will vary with their individual natures and with their previous and often rather different private experiences. Add to this the uncertainty and the inwardness with which any lessons in this area sink into the soul, and the traditional neglect no longer seems surprising.

Nevertheless, without self-knowledge much in our choices, and especially in our reactions to others, is not determined by us in any relevant sense at all. Large areas of strife between people consist of chain reactions with unintended and unwanted outcomes where no one really determined anything at all, because all were absorbed in immediate reaction and were carried along by passively produced emotions. Of course, some degree of self-knowledge is gained irrespective of what the teacher intends. Something more may be gained through the pastoral functions of the teacher. But the most interesting steps forward in this area are currently being taken by teachers of English, or perhaps more broadly by certain teachers of the humanities. Here one has in mind the kind of personal writing in which children are encouraged to capture and formulate their feelings and reactions, and also the experiments being made with various techniques of drama and discussion. In these ways a common activity may yet result in a diversity of self-knowledge.

There are also some methodological considerations, as well as the curricular ones just discussed, which arise from reflection on what is

constitutive of autonomy. For instance, it will probably always be a strong temptation to save children from mistakes and misjudgments by insisting that they benefit from our own greater experience. Certainly information and skills will often need to be supplied or taught by others if self-determination is not constantly to be self-frustration. And alternatives with their various chains of likely consequence will often need to be shown if the nature and reality of a choice or decision are to be appreciated. But it would seem impossible that risk and error could ever be wholly avoided from the attempt to develop autonomy in children. Sometimes, perhaps, a method in which the learning of a subject is slower and success in learning it is less guaranteed may yet be the best from the point of view of developing autonomy. As always, how we view the mistakes and misjudgments that are made will depend on what we regard as progress, and hence on the ends that we value.

One final aspect of procedure perhaps worth mentioning is this. To become autonomous is not just a purely maturational process, since plainly many do not become so in any significant degree. It is at least in part a learning task set by a particular ideal of human development. But in that case we may reasonably expect that this task will be assisted by holding out to children expectations in which this concept of themselves is prominent. We can draw their attention to themselves and to others as self-determining, rather than as the puppets of chance, luck, fate or some other external agency vaguely called 'they'. We can expect and encourage corresponding sorts of responsibility and excusal from blame. We can give reasons, so indirectly drawing attention to the basis on which people can determine for themselves what to think and do. We can seek to generate the motivational independence mentioned earlier as necessary for autonomy. Children can be helped over timidities, and shown their emotions and reactions. They can be reminded of their own capacities for decision if they are panicked by the absence of conventional or institutional guidance, and they can be encouraged to choose, plan and carry out activities of their own. At the primary stage of education at least, and even to some extent now at the secondary stage, methods and patterns of organization are already being worked out and tried which give much more prominent and less chancy attention to the development of autonomy as an aim. But for the moment at least, it would be rash to claim to *know* that these ways are the best.

Notes

- 1 E. Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1942.
- 2 J. Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932, p. 57.
- 3 R. F. Peck, R. J. Havighurst *et al.*, *The Philosophy of Character Development*, Wiley, 1965.
- 4 See *The Is/Ought Question*, ed. W. D. Hudson, papers XII and XIV.
- 5 On this point I agree with Edgley, if I have understood him correctly, in his recent book *Reason in Theory and Practice*, Hutchinson, 1969.
- 6 I tried to argue this more fully in my book *The Philosophy of Primary Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968, and later but more briefly in *Perspectives on Plowden*, ed. R. S. Peters, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.
- 7 E.g. in his influential article 'Liberal education and the nature of knowledge' which is reprinted in the present collection.

# The education of the emotions

R. S. Peters

## Emotions as forms of cognition

I PROPOSE in this paper to confine myself to getting clearer about what is involved in the task of educating the emotions. I do not propose to address myself to further questions about the relevance of empirical work done by psychologists to implementing this task. This would, as a matter of fact, be a very difficult undertaking for two reasons. In the first place, most of the changes in emotion studied experimentally by psychologists could not conceivably be described as 'education'. Whatever else we understand by 'education',<sup>1</sup> at least we think of it as involving a family of experiences through which knowledge and understanding develop. Injecting adrenalin into the body, administering drugs, stimulation by electrodes and various methods of conditioning, do not of themselves bring about knowledge and understanding. They may, of course, provide conditions which facilitate cognitive development. In this respect, like altering the temperature of a room or smiling at children, they may function as aids to education; but they are not themselves processes of education. A psychologist might concede this point about 'education' but conclude from it that the task of educating the emotions must therefore be an impossible one; for 'emotion' might convey to him only some general state of activation or arousal which had no necessary connexion with knowledge, understanding or belief. In this sphere of behaviour, therefore, it would follow for him that people could be stimulated or conditioned but not educated.

pity, remorse, guilt, shame, pride, wonder and the like. What sort of criterion underlies this selection? Surely, the connexion between emotions and the class of cognitions that are conveniently called 'appraisals'. These are constituted by seeing situations under aspects which are agreeable or disagreeable, beneficial or harmful in a variety of dimensions. To feel fear is, for instance, to see a situation as dangerous; to feel pride is to see with pleasure something as mine or as something that I have had a hand in bringing about. Envy is connected with seeing someone else as possessing what we want, jealousy with seeing someone as possessing something or someone to which or whom we think we have a right, and so on. Emotions have in common the fact that they involve appraisals elicited by external conditions which are of concern to us or by things which we have brought about or suffered. (We would not, for reasons such as this, call hunger and thirst emotions.) They differ from each other because of differences in what is appraised. Fear, for instance, differs from anger largely because seeing something as threatening differs from seeing it as thwarting, and these different appraisals have different consequences both physiologically and in the behaviour which may be their outcome. Clues to distinguishing emotions may be provided by overt signs such as facial expressions; but the history of experiments in this field has shown them to be unreliable signs. Also, the fact that we can say that facial expressions are reliable or unreliable as distinguishing marks of the different emotions itself reveals that we have other ways of identifying them. My thesis, however, about the appraisals involved in emotion is not that they provide very valuable evidence as to what the distinct emotions are; it is rather that these different appraisals are largely constitutive of the different emotions. By that I mean that at least a logically necessary condition for the use of the word 'emotion' is that some kind of appraisal should be involved, and that the different emotions must involve different appraisals. In other words, emotions are basically forms of cognition. It is because of this central feature which they possess that I think there is any amount of scope for educating the emotions.

Why then have psychologists concentrated on the physiological conditions underlying emotions, on expressions of emotions, and on some assumed link between emotion and action? Partly, I suppose, because Charles Darwin started a tradition of studying facial expressions with his famous, or notorious, experiments with photographs. But more importantly, because of psychology's endeavour to become a proper science based on publicly observable data. Physiological psychology had long been established as a scientifically respectable form of enquiry. It was also thought that concentration

on facial expressions or on overt actions—for instance flight in the case of fear—would provide equally reliable data, free from the hazards of introspective reports. It is, I suppose, encouraging to read a long recent article by Leeper, which returns to common sense in connecting emotions with cognitive cues, but his laboured explanation of how psychologists have failed to see this because of the general tendency of scientists to concentrate on what is palpable scarcely holds water.<sup>2</sup> What Leeper keeps locked in the cupboard is psychology's skeleton, behaviourism, which, as a methodological doctrine, has exercised a baneful and stupefying influence on academic psychology since the early part of this century. It was the concept of 'palpability' which went with this particular brand of methodological puritanism, with all its conceptual confusions and antiquated notions of scientific method, that both restricted the questions which psychologists felt they could respectably raise about emotions and which occasioned them to ignore the palpable point that we cannot even identify the emotions we are talking about unless account is taken of how a person is appraising a situation. I am not, of course, denying that there are important questions to ask in these fields—for instance, about the physiology of emotion and about expressions of emotion. I am commenting only on the restrictions placed on investigations into emotional phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

There is, too, another important historical point about the restricted study of emotion by psychologists, namely the tendency to treat fear and anger as paradigms, rather than, say, sorrow and pride. The tendency of psychologists in the behaviourist tradition to confine their work to animals as a matter of fact left them little alternative; for most emotions—for instance, pride, shame, regret, grief—are not experienced by animals because the appraisals involved in them presuppose a conceptual scheme beyond the range of animals other than man. Also, there was a highly respectable ancestry for the study of these two emotions in Darwin's work which gave prominence to them because of their obvious biological utility. But these two emotions are atypical in that they do have definite types of facial expressions connected with them and are accompanied by palpable signs of changes in the autonomic nervous system. Also, if any emotions are closely connected with typical action patterns, these two are. If sorrow were taken as a paradigm, the connexion with action patterns would be difficult to discern. And what distinctive facial expressions are connected with envy or pride? Is it plausible to suggest that highly specific physiological changes accompany remorse or regret of the sort that often accompany fear and anger?

## Emotions and passivity

Suppose, then, that we resist these historic influences, and, sticking to common sense,<sup>4</sup> insist both on the connexion between emotions and distinctive appraisals and on a broad sample of emotions rather than confining ourselves to fear and anger. An interesting point, then, emerges if we study the list, namely that most of the terms on the list can also be used as names of motives. This is not surprising; for obviously, as the terms 'emotion' and 'motive' suggest, there is a close family connexion between the two terms. This has obviously been another reason which has led countless theorists to postulate an intimate connexion between emotion and 'motivated behaviour', culminating in the historic dispute between Young and Leeper about the facilitating or disrupting effect of emotion on motivated behaviour. I have elsewhere summarized most of the important attempts to establish such a connexion,<sup>5</sup> and do not propose to elaborate this theme now. What I propose to do instead is to state briefly what I take to be the proper way of representing the undoubted overlap between these concepts.

My suggestion is that what is common to the two concepts is the connexion with distinctive appraisals. In cases where either the term 'motive' or 'emotion' is appropriate, the situation is appraised in the way which is established by the particular term—for instance, as dangerous in the case of fear, as having done something wrong in the case of guilt. In cases where we apply the term 'motive' this appraisal of the situation is regarded as providing the reason why we go on to *do* something. We talk about 'motives' only in contexts where an explanation for an *action* is given or demanded; we do not ask for motives for feeling cold, for indigestion or for mystical visions. The explanation takes the form of appealing to a postulated connexion between the appraisal and the action pattern in question. If a person's motive for making damaging remarks about a colleague is jealousy, then he must see him as achieving, or likely to achieve, something to which he thinks he has a right, and he must act in the light of this view of his behaviour.

We talk about jealousy as an emotion, on the other hand, when a person is subject to feelings that come over him when he views his colleague's behaviour in a certain light. Perhaps his perception of him is distorted by this view he has of him—perhaps his judgment of his character is warped by it—perhaps he gets into an emotional state at the mere mention of his name. The term 'emotion', in other words, is typically used in ordinary language to pick out our passivity. We speak of judgments being disturbed, warped, heightened, sharpened and clouded by emotion, of people being in



command or not being properly in control of their emotions, being emotionally perturbed, upset, involved, excited and exhausted. In a similar vein, we speak of emotional states, upheavals, outbursts and reactions. The suggestion in such cases is that something comes over people or happens to them when they consider a situation in a certain light, when they appraise it in the dimension suggested by terms such as jealousy, envy and fear. This passivity frequently occurs when we appraise situations as dangerous and frustrating; hence the obviousness of fear and anger as emotions and hence our reluctance to regard benevolence and ambition as emotions, for there are rarely marked symptoms of passivity when we think of people or situations under the aspects connected with these terms.

It is important, to avoid misunderstanding of my analysis of 'emotion' which some regard as a trifle eccentric, to be clear about the sort of analysis it is. What I am denying is that the terms 'emotion' or 'motive' pick out, as it were, distinctive items in the furniture of the mind. I am claiming, on the contrary, that they are terms we employ when we wish to link the *same* mental acts of appraisal with *different* forms of behaviour—with actions on the one hand and with a variety of passive phenomena on the other. The appraisals involved, however, need not issue in either motives or emotions. We can say, 'I envy him his equanimity' or 'I am sorry that you can't come to stay,' without acting in the light of the relevant appraisal and without being emotionally affected in any way.

What is common to both 'motives' and 'emotions', therefore, is the distinctive appraisals which are necessary to characterize these states of mind as being cases of fear, envy, jealousy, etc. The difference lies in the fact that 'motive' is a term we employ to connect these appraisals with things *we do*, emotion with things that *come over us*. In strong cases of emotion our passivity is manifest in changes in the autonomic nervous system of which we speak in metaphors which are consonant with our passivity. We boil and fume with anger; we tremble and sweat with fear; we swell and glow with pride; we blush with shame and embarrassment. If the motor system is involved, the manifestations typically exhibit an involuntary character. Our knees knock with fear; we do not knock them. There is, too, the intermediary class of some reactions, which are typically of an unco-ordinated, protopathic type, that spring from an intuitive, sometimes subliminal type of appraisal of a situation. An example would be when a person lashes out in anger or starts with fear. These are not reactions to stimuli, like jumping when one receives an electric shock, because of their cognitive core. Neither are they actions in a full-blown sense; for there is no grasp of means to ends,

no consideration of possible ends of action. They are what we call 'emotional reactions'.

This analysis of the similarities and differences between motives and emotions suggests a conceptual connexion between 'emotion' and 'passivity' and between 'motive' and 'action'. It thus denies a conceptual connexion between 'emotion' and 'action' which is so often maintained by both philosophers and psychologists alike. The widespread tendency to postulate such a connexion is due partly to the overlap between the two concepts already suggested, and partly to the tendency to take some emotions, for instance, fear and anger, as paradigms rather than others. If sorrow, grief and wonder were taken as paradigms, this connexion would surely be most implausible, for as Koestler<sup>6</sup> puts it: 'The purely self-transcending emotions do not tend towards action, but towards quiescence, tranquillity and catharsis.' There are, of course, plenty of passive phenomena which go with these emotions—for instance, weeping, catching one's breath, a lump in the throat. But one cannot act in an appropriate way out of wonder or grief; one is overwhelmed by them. Perhaps one may *express* one's feelings in a symbolic way, as in mourning, or in some reverential ritual; but the appraisals do not function as motives for appropriate action as in the case of making reparation out of guilt. In the case of motives, the actions are appropriate because they remedy or retain what is unpleasant or pleasant about the situation which is appraised. To run away in the case of fear is to avoid what is unpleasant; to make reparation out of guilt is to attempt to remedy a wrong done. But if a man is overcome by grief because his wife is dead, what can be done of a specific sort to remedy *that* situation? Expressions of emotion discharge the feeling through some sort of symbolic behaviour because there are no appropriate channels through which any relevant action can flow. Furthermore, even appraisals which can function both as motives and emotions do not necessarily lead to action, or even to tendencies to action. Jealousy and envy, for instance, may affect one's perception, judgment and memory; but they may not issue in actions in the sense in which psychologists have thought of actions. They may even be expressed in poetry.

To deny a conceptual connexion between emotion and action is not, however, to deny *de facto* connexions. In other words, though it is not part of our understanding of the concept of 'emotion' that there must be an action or tendency to action resultant on the appraisal of a situation, actions done out of a variety of motives can be contingently related to emotion; for one of the main manifestations of emotion is their tendency to disrupt, facilitate, heighten and intensify actions and performances. We can act in fear as well

as *out of fear*; for there is no reason why an appraisal of the situation should not function as both an emotion and as a motive at the same time. The preposition 'in' draws attention to the manner of acting rather than to the reason or motive for action which is picked out by 'out of'. When the same appraisal functions both as an emotion and as a motive then the question is whether the emotional aspect of it is facilitating or disrupting, which depends largely on its strength. (This was one of the points of the controversy between Young and Leeper.) In cases where emotion influences an action or performance done out of another motive, the question is whether the appraisal from which the emotion derives is consonant with, or antagonistic to that connected with the motive for the action. Fear may help a sentry acting out of a sense of duty to spot an approaching enemy long before anyone else; or it may lead him to imagine an enemy. But it is not likely to help him much if he is acting out of sexual desire in an off-duty period. Similarly, fear and envy felt for X are likely to warp and distort the moral judgments which Y may make of his actions. But they might also lead Y to notice aspects of X's behaviour which escape the notice of less biased observers. It depends on whether the appraisal involved in the emotion draws the attention away from or towards the relevant features of the situation, 'relevance' being defined in terms of whatever criteria make the actions and judgments concerned right or wrong, wise or foolish, valid or invalid, and so on.

### Emotions and wishes

My account of emotion obviously owes a great deal to Magda Arnold. It differs from her account in not postulating a conceptual connexion between emotion and action; for she holds that an emotion is 'a felt tendency towards or away from an object' which is preceded by an appraisal of the situation as being of a certain sort that is harmful or beneficial to the agent.<sup>7</sup> There is, however, another feature of her account that would give an additional explanation of the tendency to make a tight connexion between emotion and action, namely the connexion which she suggests between emotion and wishing.

'Wish' is a teleological concept which is very closely related to 'want'. It differs, however, from 'want' in that the state of affairs wished for can be very indeterminately conceived. The moon is just the sort of thing that can be wished for, because questions about what one would do with it if one had it do not have to be pressed. Also, mundane questions of taking means to get it, which go along with 'wanting', need not be raised. Now 'wanting' is conceptually

connected with action in the sense that action involves taking the means to a desired end. 'Wishing', however, conjures up only the vision of some indeterminately conceived end. But, obviously, the concepts are very intimately connected, and if emotions are conceptually connected with wishes, the tendency to connect emotion with action, or tendencies to action, via the notion of 'wanting' would be readily explained.

My contention is that there is such a conceptual connexion between emotion and wishing. If we consider emotions such as grief and wonder, which are the most intractable ones for those who try to connect emotion conceptually with action, the connexion with the weaker teleological concept of 'wish' is clear enough. A wife who is mourning for her dead husband *wishes* fervently that he were alive. But what *want* of this sort could issue in appropriate action? A lover, overwhelmed by his love, may wish that he were one with his beloved; but he cannot strictly speaking *want* such a logical impossibility. Yet these are just the sorts of thoughts that come into the heads of those deeply in love. Similarly, in cases where there is a possibility of appropriate action, the appraisal may issue only in a wish; it may not become a motive for action. A person strongly affected by fear or anger certainly has wishes such as 'would that I were away from here' or 'would that he were dead'. But nothing in the way of action or a tendency to action necessarily follows from this appraisal.

Magda Arnold also stresses the immediate, 'here and now', intuitive, indiscriminating types of appraisal that are characteristic of emotion. These features of emotion are also emphasized by Sartre, who regards emotion as 'an abrupt drop into the magical'.<sup>8</sup> This brings out well the connexion between emotion and wishes, but it also emphasizes a feature of appraisals which we associate with them when we regard them as emotions, namely their indiscriminating character. A jealous man's appraisals are not always wild and intuitive, any more than are those of a man who quite sensibly experiences fear when he hears the shriek of a bomb descending towards him. But the more we think of these appraisals as *emotions* and hence stress our passivity with regard to them, the more we tend to think of the appraisals as immediate and 'intuitive' and of our reactions as veering towards the involuntary. 'Emotional reactions' illustrate both these features. If we jump when we see a face at the window, our appraisal is immediate and intuitive and our jump has an involuntary, protopathic character—quite unlike that of the high-jumper.

I have elsewhere<sup>9</sup> attempted to generalize this theory of passivity and to connect emotional phenomena via the concept of 'wish' with

the sorts of phenomena explained by Freud in his theory of the wish, and with theories of the mechanisms underlying perceptual vigilance and defence suggested by more stimulus-response ridden theorists such as Dember. But this is not the place to develop this conceptualizing any further. Enough has been done to enable me to address myself to the question of what must be involved in the task of educating the emotions. If the foregoing analysis is not altogether misconceived, there must be two interconnected aspects of this task. There will first be the development of appropriate appraisals, and secondly the control and canalization of passivity. I propose to deal briefly with each of these aspects in turn.

## The development of appropriate appraisals

### *The justification of appraisals*

Although it may sound almost indecent to mention it in the company of psychologists, the education of the emotions is inescapably a moral matter. Most emotions and motives are, as a matter of fact, regarded also as virtues and vices—for instance, envy, benevolence, lust, pity. This is presumably because they are consonant with, or conflict with, fundamental moral principles such as respect for persons and the consideration of people's interests. And there are many emotions which are conceptually connected with general moral notions—for instance, shame, guilt, remorse. There is also the point that 'education' suggests the initiation of people into what is worth while in a way which involves some depth and breadth of understanding and knowledge. It implies, therefore, not only a view about what is valuable in life, but also the all-pervasive principle of respect for truth. For the endeavour to develop knowledge and understanding would be unintelligible if there were no concern for truth and if educators generally were unmoved by the standards connected with its pursuit, such as those involved in relevance, clarity and cogency in argument, truthfulness in the production of evidence and impartiality towards people as possible sources of what might be true. Anyone who is concerned with the education of the emotions must necessarily approach his task from the standpoint of a moral position.

It might be thought that psychologists could have little to say about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the emotions and motives that are taken to be desirable. But this is not altogether true. There are, so it seems to me, at least two respects in which psychologists might have something important to say about this. First, they might produce evidence about what is empirically possible in this sphere, human nature being what it is. There have been philosophers, such as Bertrand Russell,<sup>10</sup> who have held that

### *The education of the emotions*

jealousy is always inappropriate as an emotion, basically because it presupposes unjustifiable claims to a special relationship with another person. If psychologists could show that human beings were unable to avoid appraising situations in this way, that would be an important assertion to make. For there is a sense where 'ought' implies 'can'. It is pointless to tell people that they ought not to feel in a certain way if, in general, human beings cannot avoid being subject to such feelings. This may be untrue about jealousy, but it may well be true about fear and anger, which obviously have a much more solid biological basis. The question then, for the educator, would not be whether, but with and of what, people should be angry or afraid.

Secondly, there is a strong case for saying that psychologists who have concerned themselves with mental health are in a position to offer well-substantiated counsels of prudence about certain emotions. They might say that the influence of some emotions is so all-pervasive that their presence or absence may seriously affect a person's capacity for doing what he thinks desirable, whatever his conception of what is desirable might be. They may say, for instance, that the absence of a capacity for love or the constant presence of a feeling of threat or insecurity might have such an all-pervasive influence on the person's life. Whatever else, therefore, we do about educating children, we should have particular regard for the development of the one and the avoidance of the other; for their presence or absence might be regarded as empirically necessary conditions for the satisfactory development of a whole range of other emotions and motives.

### *The conceptual prerequisites of appraisals*

The point is often made nowadays by educators influenced by Piaget that children cannot form certain concepts unless they have first formed others, though it scarcely needs elaborate experiments to establish this. Nevertheless, even if one regards this as a matter for conceptual analysis as distinct from empirical investigation, it is certainly an important point to make in the sphere of the emotions. For what was made to look, in the writings of classical theorists such as Shand, as a kind of mental chemistry was in fact a crude attempt at making explicit conceptual priorities in the sphere of the emotions. For instance, just as one could not experience pride unless one had a concept of oneself, so one probably has to be able to experience pride before one can be subject to ambition and shame. Guilt presupposes a capacity to feel either fear of another or sympathy for another depending on whether it is the authoritarian

or humanistic type of guilt.<sup>11</sup> Looking at the more complex emotions in this way in terms of the relationship between the concepts involved in the distinctive appraisals, raises in a more modern way the old issue about the possibility of all motives and emotions being generated out of a few simple ones; it also raises difficult empirical questions about the social processes by means of which the rationalization and moralization of appraisals take place. The development of language is obviously of cardinal importance in this. To enter into the descriptions of a writer such as Henry James or George Eliot is to have one's capacity for making appraisals extended. We tend to think too much of human beings as having the capacity for making discriminations which are put into words by others. It is nearer the truth to say that we learn to make the discriminations by entering into the descriptions. It may, too, take a whole novel such as *Howard's End* to explore the range of an emotion like indignation.

### *False and irrelevant beliefs*

Most of our more complex appraisals do not presuppose just other appraisals; they also presuppose empirical beliefs of a more straightforward sort. I may just dislike someone for no apparent reason; but if I am jealous of somebody it is usually because I believe, perhaps falsely, that he has done something, or intends to do something, which threatens my claim to something or somebody. An obvious element, therefore, in the education of the emotions is the attempt to ensure that people's appraisals are not based on false beliefs.

To ensure this is not at all easy. To start with, as I have argued before, in so far as we are subject to something like jealousy as an *emotion*, the appraisal of the situation tends to be immediate and indiscriminating. We are predisposed often to interpret situations in a certain way, especially when we are in a frame of mind which we call a mood, and our beliefs may unreflectingly follow the lines of the appraisal. In a jealous frame of mind all sorts of beliefs are rigged to match our mood. Furthermore, the determination to examine the facts of the matter, to base our appraisals on well-grounded beliefs, is not a disposition that comes naturally to most men. As Bacon argued in the section on the Idols in his *Novum Organum*, the determination to look at the facts, to look for the negative instance which tells against our comfortable beliefs, goes against our inveterate tendency to believe what we wish to be the case. One of the main tasks of the education of the emotions, beginning with the development of what Freud called the ego, which he connected with the sense of reality, must therefore consist in fostering the capacity

for objectivity. This is not just a matter of ensuring that children are well-informed; it is more importantly a matter of converting what natural curiosity children have into a concern for truth, and getting them to discipline themselves to submit what they think to public tests.

Psychologists, in my view, have told us too little about the conditions under which reasonableness, in the limited sense of the disposition to base conduct and appraisals on well-grounded beliefs, tends to develop. They have said much more about the antecedent conditions of various forms of irrationality; yet anyone who is seriously concerned with teaching children to be reasonable would like to know how positively to proceed as well as what to avoid. Nevertheless, in the area of irrational conduct, Freud and his followers have invented a technique which is best described as being one of re-education. The point is that the best way of characterizing some forms of neurosis is to say that the patient is a victim of false beliefs. Of course, according to Freud's definition of 'unconscious', the sufferer is not aware of what he believes. Rather, he once believed, for instance, that his father was going to damage him in some drastic way and repressed this belief which occasioned his fear of his father. In later life he has difficulty in dealing with various authority figures. The technique of re-education consists in getting him to recall vividly what he believed about his father and to see that, whether or not this was true of his father, it is not invariably true of authority figures who remind him of his father.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, not all types of irrational conduct have a similar explanation or can be influenced to any great extent by such a process of re-education. An irrational aversion to a type of thing, for instance a rabbit—to use the classic case—might be set up by an association between that type of thing and an unpleasant experience, for instance a loud noise. This might establish a nameless dread that was reactivated whenever the individual encountered rabbits or animals with similar characteristics. In such cases, it would be stretching things to say that the person had beliefs about the rabbit which he repressed. And if he was treated by some kind of reconditioning process it would be inappropriate to describe this as a process of *education*. For nothing is done about his beliefs; all that happens is that some different sort of association is established to counteract or inhibit the original one.

I am not, of course, making any claims for the success of psycho-analysis as a technique, or chancing my arm on the extent to which irrational conduct is susceptible of one type of explanation rather than another. All I am claiming is that some irrational conduct and appraisals can be represented as being derived from unconscious



beliefs that seem to undergo a kind of irrelevant generalization, and that, in so far as the 'cure' consists in getting the patient to understand and to acknowledge this, it can be properly represented as a technique of re-education in the sphere of the emotions.

### *The recognition of emotions*

In this process of re-education in psychoanalysis, the patient does not just come to know theoretically that he at one time had some belief about a person or a past event; he is also brought to relive his previous experience which gives him some kind of additional insight into his condition. This kind of distinction is a very important one in the general field of awareness of one's own and other people's emotional states. There is a long-standing problem in the theory of knowledge about the status of knowledge of persons which is partly connected with the general problem of criteria of knowledge in this field, and partly with the issue about whether there is any kind of priority to be attached to knowledge of one's own case.<sup>13</sup> But whatever is said about these very difficult matters, there is certainly an important distinction to be made between knowing certain facts about oneself and other people and the more imaginative type of entering into one's own and other people's more recondite emotions, for which we use the term 'insight'.

Many claim that this imaginative ability is encouraged by taking part in games and drama, as well as by literature; but this is an *a priori* type of hunch rather than one substantiated by reliable empirical studies. As, however, one's ability to recognize emotions in oneself is a feature of being educated in this sphere, and as a criterion of being educated emotionally is the tendency for one's appraisals of others to be based on a realistic assessment of their condition, further knowledge about how this imaginative ability is developed is of crucial importance in the education of emotions. In this sphere, we are particularly prone to see what we fear or wish to be the case; our beliefs are likely to follow the lines of our moods and intuitive appraisals. If we lack the capacity for ascertaining what really is the case, we are very likely to remain in what Spinoza called 'The state of human bondage', at the mercy of our own prejudices and passivity.

### *Emotional sincerity*

Often in such cases, we are not so much victims of ignorance as of insincerity, or *mauvaise-foi*, about which Sartre has written so much. 'Sincere' is applied to people and their speech and other forms of

### *The education of the emotions*

symbolic gestures (for instance, smiles). It can relate either to cases where one does not deliberately mislead people by one's utterances or symbolic gestures, or, more generally, to one's determination to reveal, as well as one can, what one's feelings, beliefs, etc., are. Often one has some strong motive for being insincere—for instance fear or shame—and the feeling associated with the feigned appraisal helps to develop a tendency towards deceiving oneself as well as others. For any educator, honesty and sincerity must be cardinal virtues, for he is concerned with the development of knowledge and understanding, and if people are concerned with finding out what is true, it must in general be the case that they are disposed to reveal their thoughts and feelings to each other. Without this, no kind of co-operative enquiry can flourish. How children are best encouraged to develop this disposition is an empirical matter about which it would be rash for a philosopher to make any pronouncement.

### *The control and canalization of passivity*

So much for the appraisal aspect of the education of the emotions. I now propose to make a few observations about the other aspect of it, which is concerned with the management of our passivity. This is, to a large extent, a complementary aspect of the task of developing appropriate appraisals; for the task of freeing people from false and irrelevant beliefs, of enabling them to have insight into themselves and into others and of encouraging sincerity is made doubly difficult because of the countervailing influence of more primitive, wild types of appraisal that warp and cloud perception and judgment and aid and abet self-deception and insincerity.

### *The warping and clouding of perception and judgment*

If, as Freud argued, the infant tends to live on in us with the wild and intuitive forms of appraisal characteristic of a more primordial condition of mind, even after the laborious development of the ego and the sense of reality, how can this ever-present influence on our perception and judgment be minimized?

There are, roughly speaking, three ways of tackling this task. The first would be to use some non-educational technique such as conditioning or the administering of drugs. At best these techniques would insert a countervailing condition, or neutralize an existing condition, which might enable more positive educational techniques, that dealt directly with the development of beliefs and appraisals, to get a firmer grip.

The second approach would be that used by Freud and advocated

by Spinoza, namely that of bringing a person to have some kind of insight into the sources of his irrationalities. Even Freud himself, though, never regarded this as a sufficient technique. Indeed he claimed that in some cases it even exacerbates the symptoms, like the distribution of menu cards at a time of famine.

A much more important positive approach is that envisaged by Spinoza in his saying that it takes an emotion to control an emotion. The predicament of most of us, an extreme case of which is presented by the paranoiac, is that we are too much subject to a kind of monadic myopia. Our interpretation of the world is inveterately self-referential. We find difficulty in peering out and seeing the world and others as they are, undistorted by our own fears, hopes and wishes. Better understanding of ourselves could not, of itself, remedy this condition. There are, however, certain appraisals which lack this self-referential character, notably love, respect, the sense of justice and concern for truth. The development of what Koestler calls the 'self-transcending emotions' is probably the most effective way of loosening the hold on us of the more primitive, self-referential ones. To become effective, they must become stabilized in sentiments, rather than simply issue in sporadic emotions, the term 'sentiment' indicating a settled disposition to make appraisals of a certain sort. More precise knowledge about the conditions under which these sentiments are formed would, in my view, be one of the most important contributions which social psychology could make to educational theory.

#### *Motives and the connexion of appraisals with action patterns*

In my preceding analysis of the similarities and differences between the concepts of 'emotion' and 'motive' I made the point that appraisals can be connected either with our passivity, which may have a distorting and disrupting effect on judgment and action, or with action patterns, in which case they function as motives. So one of the basic ways in which passivity is controlled is to develop appropriate action patterns with which the various appraisals can become connected. Thus a man who is subject to fear will have a settled disposition to act in an appropriate way. His chance of being overcome by passive phenomena is thereby lessened. This transformation of vague wishes into determinate wants and hence into relevant action is of manifest educational importance. To writhe with sympathy, to fume with moral indignation, to squirm with guilt or shame, may be more desirable than to be incapable of such feelings. But it is surely more desirable still that these appraisals should also function as motives for doing whatever is appropriate. This is

particularly important in the context of dealing with tendencies to action which issue from undesirable motives such as envy, hatred and lust. A vague tendency to say 'no' to oneself issuing from a feeling of guilt or shame, and unconnected with any disposition to act in an appropriate way, is singularly ineffective. Of more value are tendencies to action issuing from positive sentiments such as respect, benevolence and the sense of justice; for my guess is that the rather negative type of moral education, which issues from the puritan tradition, is not particularly effective. In developing these more positive moral patterns of action the transition from second-hand, external sorts of appraisals to first-hand ones, which become linked with settled action patterns, is crucial. Much of what is moral is marked out by generalized appraisals such as 'wrong', 'good' and 'naughty'. Terms like these indicate that there are reasons for doing or not doing things but do not intimate at all clearly what the reasons are. Children have to be taught in such a way that they are led to see the reasons for and against courses of action built into them—for instance 'that's unfair' and 'that is hurting him'. The development of such concrete first-hand appraisals, and linking them by on-the-spot training with patterns of action, are one of the most important tasks of moral education.

Connected with the puritan tradition is the emphasis on 'character', or strength of will, which exhibits itself in higher order traits such as consistency, integrity, determination and so on. What is called 'weakness of will' is explicable in terms of emotions such as fear, anxiety and lust, which disrupt people's well-meaning intentions. Here again, one wonders about the puritan tradition. Strength of character is so often represented in negative terms, as saying 'no' to temptation, as standing firm, impervious to social pressure. My guess is that the influence of positive, self-transcending sentiments is just as important in the development of this as either prudence or the more negative superego types of appraisals.

sphere of emotion, which lies between extreme forms of passivity and appropriate action. In the case of many appraisals, such as those connected with hate, fear and lust, we would be in a very sorry plight if there were no intermediary between quivering in the passive state specific to the appraisals in question and launching into the relevant actions of murder, flight and rape. The mechanism of 'sublimation' is of obvious relevance here. Much of civilized life, including poetry, manners, wit and humour, consists in devising and learning forms of expression which enable us to deal with emotions in a way which is not personally disturbing or socially disruptive. Control can, of course, go too far. It is interesting to speculate, for instance, about what happens to those who are brought up with a prohibition on the public display of any emotion, either in gesture or in extravagant utterances, such as those of the poet. Do they become stunted in their capacity for experiencing emotion; or does it distort their judgment, facilitate or inhibit their actions in various subterranean ways; or do they tend to form deep and lasting sentiments for people, causes and places? And what of those who are encouraged always to display their emotions publicly? Is the transience of their emotional states matched by an inability to form stable sentiments? There are a host of empirical speculations in this area, but no well-established knowledge.

### Upshot

This brings me to my final point which is really the point of writing this paper. Educational problems are not of the sort which can be solved by any one of the established disciplines such as philosophy, psychology or sociology. They always raise questions to answer which there must be co-operation between people working in different disciplines. I have found that when I have done some work on the philosophical aspects of an educational problem, a host of *empirical questions* are opened up. If I ask my colleagues in psychology about such issues, they usually reply that no well-designed experiments have been done in this field. In many cases, this lack of research is due not to the fact that it would be impossible to test limited hypotheses, but to the fact that various puritanical traditions in psychology have discouraged work. And so we continue in our abysmal ignorance, dealing with the minds of our children in a haphazard way that would not be tolerated by those who deal with their bodies.

The area of the education of the emotions is a case in point. My contention is that most of the work in this field, with the notable exception of that of Solomon Asch and Magda Arnold, has been

hamstrung by the behaviouristic and physiological traditions and by the concentration on fear and anger as paradigms of emotions. My more positive intention has been to construct a conceptual map of the area which reveals, I hope, both what is distinctive of emotional phenomena and what needs to be known if we are to tackle more systematically the cluster of problems connected with this very important area of education.

## Notes

- 1 R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education*, Allen & Unwin, 1966, ch. I.
- 2 R. W. Leeper, 'Needed developments in motivational theory', in D. Levine (ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, University of Nebraska Press, 1965, pp. 37-40.
- 3 See, for instance, A. Mandler and E. Galanter (eds), *New Directions in Psychology*, New York, 1962.
- 4 See R. S. Peters, *The Concept of Motivation*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958 and 'Motivation, emotion and the conceptual scheme of common-sense', in T. Mischel (ed.), *Human Action*, New York, 1969.
- 5 R. S. Peters, 'Emotions and the category of passivity', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, 62, sect. 3, pp. 117-34.
- 6 A. Koestler, *The Act of Creation*, Pan, 1966, pp. 273-85.
- 7 M. B. Arnold, *Emotion and Personality*, Cassell, 1960, chs 9-12.
- 8 J.-P. Sartre, *The Emotions*, trans. B. Frechtman, 1948, p. 90.
- 9 R. S. Peters, 'Emotions, passivity, and the place of Freud's theory in psychology', in B. B. Wolman and E. Nagel (eds), *Scientific Psychology*, New York, 1965 and 'Motivation, emotion', op. cit.
- 10 B. Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, Allen & Unwin, 1929.
- 11 For the distinction see R. Money-Kyrle, *Psycho-analysis and Politics*, Duckworth, 1951.
- 12 The writing of both this and the succeeding two sections was helped by a preview which John Wilson of the Farmington Trust, Oxford, was kind enough to let me have of his book, now published: *Education in Religion and the Emotions*, Heinemann, 1971.
- 13 See J. Austin, 'Other minds', *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, suppl. vol., 20, 1946, pp. 148-87; N. Malcolm, 'Knowledge of other minds', *J. Philos.*, 55, 1958, pp. 969-78; and A. J. Ayer, 'Our knowledge of other minds', *Philosophical Essays*, Macmillan, 1954, and *The Problem of Knowledge*, Macmillan, 1956.

# The arts and the education of feeling and emotion

R. W. Hepburn

If one studies some current philosophical writing on emotion, and then turns back to problems about *educating* the emotions, it is not hard to work out a plausible and attractive story of how such education can be furthered. I should like to outline this story and examine it critically—not the whole story, however, for the subject is vast. I shall look only at one special but important part of it—the part that concerns the educating of emotion through the appreciation of art; and I shall have to be selective even there. Much more will be said about literature than about the other arts.

On the traditional view of emotion, it is difficult to see how an emotion is educable at all. That view suggests that emotion-words are the names of wholly inner experiences, distinguished from each other by their feeling-quality alone. It is hard enough to know how we could learn to use these emotion-words, on such an account, and to communicate about such purely private inner occurrences—as we have to if education is to be possible. But it is equally difficult to understand how, on that view, we could do anything to, and with, our emotions that could count as educating them. We might speak of checking, controlling and suppressing private, inner feelings. But what about transforming and civilizing emotions, or rendering them more discriminating, appropriate, reasonable, sensitive? If these questions are intractable, it is because that traditional view of emotions as inner feelings is inadequate.

Today, we have been made aware that the concept of emotion is complex: that, for instance, emotions have *objects*, and have them necessarily. My fear is fear of  $x$ , my rage rage at  $y$ , my delight is delight at  $z$ . Part of what it is to be afraid is to perceive my situation as threatening: that is, a cognitive element enters necessarily into the having of that emotion. In emotions like jealousy and nostalgia, the cognitions or judgments are themselves quite complex. Now, if there is an essentially cognitive element to the having of an emotion, then reason and reasoning can after all gain purchase in this area. We can argue about the correctness, reasonableness, of seeing one's situation in this or that way, and thus of having this or that emotion.

## *The arts and the education of feeling and emotion*

Emotions can have adequate or inadequate grounds, be justified or be absurd. If so, they are educable.

To have certain emotions involves not only perception or misperception of the facts; it involves also evaluation of the facts. Part of what it is to feel nostalgia is to compare the desirability of being at home and of being where you are. Likewise, understanding another person's emotions is partly a matter of understanding how he evaluates elements in his situation—what he sees as an improvement or an impairment of that situation.

These cognitive and evaluative elements can be brought together in the notion of 'seeing as'. To feel gratitude involves seeing so-and-so as one's benefactor; feeling apprehension, seeing such-and-such as possibly dangerous. There are no theoretical limits of complexity or scope in emotional 'seeings-as'. A religious or metaphysical view, for instance, may seek to mediate and control emotions directed at nature as a whole—nature as divine handiwork, or as ominous and inhospitable.

Were emotions wholly inner, quasi-sensations of varying quality, we should be altogether *passive* under them. Recent analysis emphasizes that, in part at least, having an emotion is an active affair, since it involves selective attention, the grouping or interpreting of perceived features of one's situation, and the making of judgments of value.

In the light of all this, we can begin to give some meaning to the task of educating the emotions. It will be concerned, for a start, with ousting vague and imprecise or crude emotions by more specific, appropriate and discriminating ones; with preventing emotion-experience from stagnating—replacing jaded and repetitive habit-emotions with fresh and keen emotions, coupled logically to new individualized ways of seeing.

Now, the story goes on, developments like these are furthered most effectively if, among the objects of a person's emotions, are some so contrived as to control his ways of seeing and feeling with unusual accuracy, and to facilitate quite unhackneyed and richly variegated emotions: that is to say, if they are works of art.

To have something before us by way of illustration, think of the well-known passage in *Anna Karenina* (pt VII, ch. 16), where Levin expresses his emotion at seeing his new-born child for the first time:

What he felt towards this little creature was utterly unlike what he had expected. There was nothing cheerful and joyous in the feeling; on the contrary, it was a new torture of apprehension. It was the consciousness of a new sphere of liability to pain. And this sense was so painful at first, . . .



that it prevented him from noticing the strange thrill of senseless joy and even pride that he had felt when the baby sneezed.

How can the reading of a passage like this be emotionally educative? Because emotion is being made the object of a sensitive, attentive study in its own right—not simply being lived through unreflectively: not classified in the rough and distorting way our normal practical, utilitarian interests encourage. Most of all, the individuality, unexpectedness and intricacy of emotion are not denied, in the way the generalizing clichés of everyday life deny them and reduce them to greeting-card emotion-stereotypes.

In the passage I quoted, Tolstoy retains the emotion-words 'joy', 'apprehension', etc. But a writer need not do so. He may express an emotion with great precision without naming it at all. He describes, rather, how the object of the emotion is seen and interpreted, whether by himself or by a character. Recall, for instance, Shakespeare's marvellously condensed and evocative phrase, 'The dark backward and abysm of time'.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the words a writer uses may be very closely related to the emotion expressed—we might say 'internally related' to it: the precise emotion may be dependent on a precise way of seeing, and that way of seeing be expressible only by certain words in a certain order. A corollary: literature (and, in different ways, other arts) can be creative of new emotions, not in the sense that a new drug might elicit a new inner feeling-state, but by eliciting a new way of seeing, a way that is logically inseparable from a way of feeling. A work of art is not constructed for the titillation of feelings we already have known, but for the *enlargement* of our emotional experience. Recall Eliot's familiar words from his essay on Dante: 'in developing the language, enriching the meanings of words, . . . [the poet] is making possible a much wider range of emotion and perception for other men, because he gives them the speech in which more can be expressed'.<sup>2</sup>

A second corollary is this: the resources of literature—all the devices (such as metaphor and symbolism) by which a poem can be both intricate and unified—make it possible for a reader to experience quite precise emotional responses to complexes normally beyond his powers to hold together in perception or imagination, and about which he therefore tends to have confused and anxious emotions.

The value and *point* of all this talk about precision, particularity and freshness of emotion, is to be brought out, then, by comparison with the normal state of affairs—where, like opinions and judgments of value, emotions too are characteristically blurred and hackneyed,

are emotion-clichés, determined or conditioned by popular culture. In day-to-day life it is continually suggested to us that 'this is what one feels, in *this* situation'. And the 'this' (both times) stands for something blunted, generalized and crude. But why, and by what authority, should one's inner life be constructed out of shabby clichés, and the range of one's emotion restricted to a sort of lowest common denominator of human response to generalized human situations—a slavish mimesis of the mediocre?

There are moral as well as aesthetic issues here: questions of honesty and sincerity. If I accept the stereotypes, I prevent my emotions from reflecting at all accurately how things actually stand in my particular case. Or rather, I suppress, with a mixture of self-deception and apathy, the complexities of my incipient actual response (a response, which, if allowed to develop, might become no less individualized than Levin's *vis-à-vis* the baby); and I substitute instead the easy, conventionalized response, the greeting-card stereotype. Tolstoy, one can say, is emotionally educative, in that his reader is much less likely to disavow the complexity of his own emotions and insincerely suppress them; and is far better equipped to acknowledge, and find words to articulate, fugitive and unmapped forms of feeling. It is not simply that a reader finds verbal expression in literature for life-emotions of his own; but even where this is not so, his reliance upon emotion-clichés is constantly called in question. It is called in question by the skilful presentation of *any* clearly individualized complex of emotion.

These moral implications are vigorously brought out in a very relevant essay of D. H. Lawrence: 'A propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*'.<sup>1</sup> 'Our education from the start,' Lawrence wrote, 'has taught us a certain range of emotions, what to feel and what not to feel.' What we do feel is thus 'counterfeit feeling', 'false feeling'. In particular, he claimed, 'all love today is counterfeit. It is a stereotyped thing.' As such it cannot satisfy us: with counterfeit emotion 'nobody is really happy, nobody is really contented, nobody has any peace'.

It is not only against insincerity and apathy that emotional education through the arts contends. Another very proper target is *sentimentality*. Sentimentality is essentially *undiscriminating*. Sentimental patriotism, for instance, blurs all differences of value between the various aspects of one's country's way of life: it is wilfully unheeding of valuable aspects in the life of other nations. In general, sentimental emotion is unperceptive of, and insensitive to, the detailed nature of its object, and to that extent it is *irrational* emotion. Excess of excitement makes one unaware of the lack of clear-sightedness. There is a drunkenness of sentiment, where the object is allowed to fall quite out of focus—self-indulgently allowed, since then the

emotion can be wallowed in, free from the obtrusive individuality and independence of the object itself. Once again, the emotion-control of an effective work of art can help, by contrast, to show up the irrationality and blindness of the sentimentally indiscriminating, and can provide a yardstick for measuring the integrity of one's own emotions.

I want now to go further and say that the role of art in delivering one from emotion-clichés is not connected only with questions of sincerity, honesty and perceptiveness, but also with an aspect of one's personal *freedom*. Let us call that aspect 'emotional freedom'. The connexion with freedom is this. The emotion-cliché, the stereotype, can be seen as a trap; for it says, implicitly, that this is the only option for feeling in this sort of situation. In contrast, an aesthetic education is an introduction to countless *alternative* possibilities for feeling: the options are shown to be immeasurably more diversified than the clichés allow. And, in general, freedom is increased in direct proportion to the increase in options. In *Thought and Action*<sup>4</sup> Stuart Hampshire makes the point very clearly: 'Human creativeness in art prevents the recognized varieties of feeling, and established conceptions of the mind, from ever hardening into a final pattern'. In a sense—a weak sense—some of these alternatives were open to us before ever we encountered the works of art in which they are set forth; but they are unlikely to become *live* options; our freedom will not become an *effective* freedom until we have a concrete image and a vivid realization of the options: and this art can supply.<sup>5</sup>

In a more obvious way also, literature can be an agent of freedom. One does not have to be a wholehearted Freudian to know that the less a person understands the feelings and urges in him, the more he tends to be their prey, and the less free he is with regard to them. To be free to modify a pattern of feeling, it is essential to have a grasp of its origins, objectives and affiliations. Nor again do we have to be thoroughgoing disciples of Croce or of Collingwood to see that the explorations of emotion in art can enormously add to our grasp of such patterns, and by so doing lessen our vulnerability to ill-understood emotions, give us an increased dominance over them and thus enhance our freedom. The very pole of un-freedom here, as Plato well knew, is a state of obsession, where only *one* indiscriminating, reality-distorting type of feeling is in command. But well short of that pathological extreme are states where a life is impoverished through the tyranny of a few repetitive, blinkering, indiscriminating emotions. This kind of impoverishment may very well be mitigated by exposure to art-emotions in their variety and particularity.

The logical interconnectedness of feeling and perceiving means

that the emotionally impoverished and unfree is also the perceptually impoverished and unfree. As Dewey put it,<sup>6</sup> 'Any predominant mood automatically excludes all that is uncongenial with it . . . [an emotion] reaches out tentacles for that which is cognate, for things which feed it and carry it to completion. Only when emotion dies or is broken to dispersed fragments, can material to which it is alien enter consciousness.' Or, we can add, when the range of available emotion-patterns is increased, as art can increase it.

To attribute an emotion to oneself is not simply to speak of a brief episode of one's mental life, a way of apprehending one's world-at-an-instant. If I say that I am jealous or in love, for instance, I implicitly forecast a range of appropriate *futures*. Love and jealousy have a course or courses to run. The education of emotion involves, importantly, the extending of a person's expectations about possible courses, careers of emotion. Once again—and here is the relevance of these remarks—gratuitous denials of freedom occur where an over-simple popular myth dominates one's understanding of how some emotion 'must' work itself out. The stereotype can bring a sense of inevitability to what is not inevitable at all, and a person be made to feel an actor in a play written by another—allowed perhaps a little improvising, but no tampering with the main emotional plot.

To speak of emotional freedom is a very different thing from speaking of freedom from emotion. The first is highly desirable: but the second is very undesirable indeed. There is in fact a close link between freedom and emotional vitality, keenness of feeling. The person who lacks emotional energy is like a ship that cannot manoeuvre because it is becalmed or because its engines have failed. 'Free choice', in a minimal sense, is still possible (the rudder itself can be moved); but it is not efficacious. This point, though obvious, is often buried by misleading theories of emotion: for instance, a theory that sees emotion as essentially primitive and vestigial and thus unfitted to play a main part in civilized, rational life: or sees the occurrence of emotion as signalling disorder, defect or deficiency. William James has an eloquent response to such accounts. He invites his reader to imagine the world as it would look to one who had eradicated or withdrawn all emotions and emotional qualities. It would be 'almost impossible', he wrote, 'to imagine such a condition of negativity and deadness'. There would no longer be any importance, 'significance, character, expression, or perspective'. 'As the excited interest which these passions put into the world is our gift to the world, just so are the passions themselves *gifts* . . .'; 'and the world's materials lend their surface passively to all the gifts alike.'<sup>7</sup>

Most people are, in fact, familiar enough with the unhappy experience of at least a partial withdrawal of emotional vitality. It has been argued that the conditions of contemporary life make such withdrawal depressingly easy. For instance, the adopting of an objective, scientific attitude to the objects of our study and manipulation requires a deliberate withholding of emotional projection from the objects or the people we are dealing with. To Schiller: 'the spirit of abstraction stifles the fire at which the heart should have warmed itself'.<sup>8</sup> Or, as Stuart Hampshire recently put it: 'The price of full rationality is a separation of argument, and of systematic understanding, from the primary emotions'.<sup>9</sup> Now, the argument goes on, it is art that provides objects so fashioned as to engage precisely this whole range of experience, so much held in abeyance elsewhere. J. S. Mill's recovery from his state of emotional deadness, through the poetry of the Romantics, gives us a familiar parable. And Franz Kafka wrote in a letter: 'a book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us'.<sup>10</sup>

We can link this theme of the emotion-revivifying power of art-experience to my earlier remarks about the numbing effect of emotional habit, the treadmill of generalized emotional expectations. Proust fashions a link for us in the passage in *A La Recherche*, where Marcel sees a peasant girl from a train at dawn:<sup>11</sup>

I felt in her presence that desire to live which is reborn in us whenever we become conscious anew of beauty and of happiness. We invariably forget that these are individual qualities, and, substituting for them in our mind a conventional type at which we arrive by striking a sort of mean amongst the different faces that have taken our fancy, the pleasures we have known, we are left with mere abstract images which are lifeless and dull because they are lacking in precisely that element of novelty, different from anything we have known . . .

Finally, although the points I have been mentioning concern mainly the enhancing of self-knowledge and individual emotional freedom, they carry implications of more than one kind for our understanding of other people and the managing of our relations with others. For instance, most of what was said about knowledge of one's own emotions can be transferred without fundamental change to knowledge of other people's emotions. Education of emotion through art is a learning how to make sense of patterns of behaviour in others—patterns that can otherwise lack unity and intelligibility. A wide understanding of emotional possibilities is at least as important to the moral life as a tenacious holding to principle and maxim.

Indeed, a too-exclusive stressing of principle can thwart emotional understanding. In Schiller's words again: 'We cannot be just, kindly, human to others—without the power of feeling our way into the situation of others, making others' feelings our own: but', he goes on, 'this power gets repressed, as we strengthen character by means of principles'.

So far I have been trying to put together a plausible, reassuring and optimistic account of the benign effects of art-education in respect of the emotions and feelings. From now on, I shall refer to this as the 'initial account'. It has been a one-sided account, deliberately so; and a counter-case can easily be mounted. In the rest of this chapter I shall state and try to appraise such a case, and work in this way towards a more balanced view.

One set of objections can come from philosophers who are not satisfied that the analysis of emotion, sketched in the initial account, is an adequate one. Emotions (it was said) are controllable, and hence educable through the arts, because all emotions necessarily have objects, and the work of art functions as object in the context of art-appreciation. Against this it may be insisted that some emotions do not have objects. For instance, one's life may contain episodes of melancholy emotion or of buoyant, euphoric emotion—undirected at any object at all.

The account is also much too blandly optimistic about the possibility of achieving the goal of a perfectly refined, discriminating expression of emotion. Numerous writers testify rather to the obstacles in the way of expression, and are more conscious of these than they are of any success in overcoming them.

Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision . . .<sup>12</sup>

Let us take stock so far. First, on the analysis of emotion and object-of-emotion. I do not think that the incompleteness of the recent philosophical accounts makes as much difference as the objector suggests. Even if not all emotions have objects, at least on all instances of their occurrence, there remain ways in which these emotions can be expressed discriminatingly, without reference to any specific object. They can be expressed through describing how the world looks, how things seem to the subject. In the absence of a determinate object, we are not thrown back, that is, on the impossible task of describing wholly inner, private sensations. I

describe neither a specific object nor a sensation, when I say, to give an example,

the odds is gone  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon<sup>13</sup>

or

from this instant,  
There's nothing serious in mortality:  
All is but toys . . .  
The wine of life is drawn . . .<sup>14</sup>

It is useful to be reminded that artists and writers themselves are not always optimistic about the possibilities of perfect and complete communication of emotion. There are bound to be limits to the emotional particularity that is attainable—in literature anyway—when we have to rely upon concepts. Concepts are public and shared, and hence general. But the limits can none the less be pushed back much further by art than in the communication of ordinary life. So much is familiar and trite. What is worth stressing, however, is the way in which experience of art involves awareness *both* of unusually effective communication of feeling, *and* of the presence of limits even here. To come to accept these limits realistically is an important part of the education of feeling. Here, two extremes need to be avoided, and art-experience can help one to avoid them. On the one side, a person may have quite unrealistic aspirations for precise and complete emotional communication. He moves to the other extreme, if, when that hope is disappointed, he withdraws in thoroughgoing disillusionment, and laments that no one can begin to understand how anyone else feels, or tell anyone about his own feelings. The reader of Tolstoy or Henry James or Proust has seen too much expressed, and expressed with accuracy, to have room for such thoroughgoing scepticism: but he is also aware, no less acutely, of what it is like to be brought up against limits and opacities.

Our objections and replies have been discussed in the context of literature and the explorations of emotions in literature. A harder task for the initial account—and one that space will not permit me to develop here—would be to describe the place of emotion in certain of the other arts, particularly in music. Apart from the cases of descriptive (or programme) music and song, music depicts no situations. It follows that if emotions are expressed in the music, it must be not only without objects, but also without situation-appraisals and seeings-as. On the initial account, these are logical

essentials of any emotion; and so if that account is accepted, absolute music must be judged incapable of expressing emotions.

Three brief comments may be offered. 1. It could be argued that music expresses not emotions but moods and the dynamics of feeling, its surging and relaxing, its tensions and releases from tension, expectations and fulfilments. 2. The reply will come, however, that music-criticism is full of ascriptions of emotions proper to music: and some at least of these are plausible. If this is accepted, I suspect that a very complex story would be needed to account for it. It would have to refer to bodies of association between musical and emotional data built up in a long-developing tradition, in which vocal music and programme music play an important role, and in which a work is constantly mindful of its predecessors. Interacting with this are 'natural' or semi-natural factors like correlations between rhythms and bodily processes, pitch changes and their analogies with calling, weeping, murmuring and so on. 3. Lastly, musical emotion *does* show the current account to be incomplete and over-simplified, if that account postulates a more-or-less undifferentiated excitement in addition to the appraisals of situation. It seems simply undeniable that, even in the absence of a precise or determinate situation-description, musical feeling can be highly individuated.

I want now to consider a different and (educationally) more worrying objection to the initial account. That account had much to say about the power of the arts to make available new emotional responses and attitudes, whereby to overcome the dominance of emotion-clichés. It may be countered, however, that those new responses and attitudes are themselves particularly liable to become hackneyed; and that, paradoxically, the arts can function as high-class purveyors of stereotypes.

Works of art may replace one set of clichés with others of their own creation, in the end no more or less flexible, discriminating or fit to cope with the complexities of real life than the clichés they displace. One thinks of the literary *schema* of courtly love, or the procession of trend-setting hero- and heroine-types, down to the existentialist rebels of today. And the existentialist rebel—the opponent of all bourgeois role-playing, all denying of the particular, all stereotyping—is himself now a stereotype, a very pattern of conformity.

The optimistic initial account saw one of the educative functions of art as the overcoming of a tendency to fashion the life of the emotions upon prefabricated or second-hand forms of feeling. The state of affairs that we are now considering is one in which an emotion may not be trusted, or may even be disowned, unless it is found



expressed in some work of serious literature, and is thus authorized and vetted. One interrogates the current drama and novel to find, as it were, what one is permitted to feel, what emotional attitudes are sanctioned or mandatory. At one time it will be *Angst*: at another a sense of the absurd.<sup>15</sup>

The 'phoney'ness and dishonesty of feeling here need not be spelled out. Lawrence was aware of these dangers. In the passage quoted earlier on 'counterfeit emotion', he adds, 'radio and the film' mediate 'mere counterfeit emotion all the time, the current press and literature the same'.<sup>16</sup>

This objection can, I think, be sustained, though doubtless Lawrence's language is exaggerated. The more we stress the value of art in education of emotions, the stronger may be the temptation to draw our emotions once more second-hand—but with reassuring 'authority'—from art. Again, the teacher needs to devise strategies for minimizing the danger. One such strategy, an obvious one, is to ensure exposure to as wide a range of art-works as possible—to many different periods and idioms—so as to remedy the one-sidedness of particular works and the dominance of any particular authors. The prestige of the authors of one's own day can, on occasion, provide a megaphone or projector for intensifying the current emotion-clichés, making them seem inescapable and 'necessary', rather than submitting them to any critique. Hence the importance of not concentrating too exclusively on contemporary arts, or too readily according the status of *sage* to a contemporary writer.

Hence the importance also of asking, and arguing over, the following questions, questions too much neglected. Is it true that the roles, forms of emotion, patterns of feeling shown as dominant in some works of art, are in fact inescapable, inevitable, the only ones 'available' in the contemporary situation? Or is their supposed inevitability most often a myth, a literary fabrication, but one presented with enough imaginative force as to be in danger of becoming *subjectively* inescapable to many who are exposed to it? To keep raising these questions helps to mitigate the risks of absorbing new clichés for old, and also usefully inculcates an attitude of questioning, of taking and retaining an initiative with regard to one's own emotions and emotional attitudes outside art altogether.

These reflections have carried us into the topic of emotional freedom once again, and suggest obvious objections to the initial account of that. It will be claimed that the account greatly exaggerated the extent to which the arts can be emotionally liberating: for we have opposed to freedom and self-determination, determination by cliché and stereotype. To have one's image of human possibility grossly restricted by a diet, say, of Beckett or Genet, is to have one's

freedom diminished, in so far as degrees of freedom are proportional to awareness of options. And, once more, it can be its very imaginative forcefulness (together with the reappearance of the same attitudes and emotions in a succession of works) that imparts a false appearance of inevitability to the view of life expressed. 'Today *this* is how you must feel.'

Clearly, what I am calling an 'image of human possibility' or a 'view of life' has philosophical as well as literary relevance. Philosophical *relevance*, yes: but plays, poems and novels rarely contain philosophy as such. Philosophy is essentially argument, the presenting and defending of grounds for claims made and views presented. In a work of art, however, a view is presented, characteristically, *without* its grounds, without a systematic sifting of evidence and alternatives. The art-work is none the worse for that; but imaginative vitality is liable, in such cases, to be mistaken for philosophical soundness. The point being made is anything but new: although the idiom is different, it repeats the core of Plato's critique of the arts in *The Republic*. Only the philosopher, not the epic poet or tragedian, takes proper account of the Forms.

Emotional freedom—like any other aspect of freedom—is both attractive and uncomfortable, disturbing. Though the enhancing of it can be one motive for a concern with the arts, the clichés offered by art-works themselves can be clutched with relief, and freedom in a measure willingly lost again—in an agreeable lapse into *mauvaise foi*.

Without question, the arts can be enhancers of freedom; but far from automatically—their powers need to be appropriated intelligently. For this, it is of first importance to make clear and vivid that distinction between imaginative force and philosophical necessity or adequacy of grounds. On the one hand: 'This is how things would look if . . . ' or 'to one who believes that . . . ' ; on the other hand: 'Things can be seen truly in no other way, because . . . ' .

It is no less important to combat a tacitly popular view of the *development* of the arts—a determinist or historicist view of their development. (The topic relates closely to the group of arguments just discussed.) It is assumed, often far too readily, that the dominant emotional complexes and attitudes expressed in the arts at any one time are the results of a dialectical process by which all alternatives have been rendered unavailable. In actual fact, changes in the arts—their content, idiom and style—are due to a large number of diversified factors in interrelation. They include unpredictable changes in media and techniques—the discovery of oils, for instance, the inventing of the valved horn, and so on; the rediscovery of earlier art-styles, the impact of inventions in other fields—for instance

the impact of photography upon the visual arts; and the equally unpredictable appearance of individual, innovating, artistic genius. The danger to freedom from the over-simplified, historicist account can be averted by attending to just these (untidy, undialectical) details of actual aesthetic changes. To fail to be alerted to this complexity is to be so much the more vulnerable to emotional conditioning and indoctrination by art—these being strongly contrasted with emotional education.

The distinction between indoctrinating and educating may not be self-evident where the emotions are concerned: but we are now in a position to see that it does have an important application. The recent philosophical analyses of emotion help one to understand just how it can apply. To be indoctrinated is to be prompted non-rationally to a belief or attitude or other state of mind: without, that is, being given or encouraged to seek good grounds. To be educated is to be put in a position to choose, knowing the alternatives, the pros and cons, the strength of the case. If emotions were simply inner feeling-states, then possibly at best they could be *induced*: a subject could be conditioned to have them. But, as we saw at the outset, there would be no room for the language of educating, or of providing grounds: no points either for rational appraisal or for the inserting of will. But there *is* room for these, if we realize (and teach) that emotions involve interpreting situations, and a selective directing of attention.

In the initial account, we moved by a gentle transition from the topic of emotional freedom to that of emotional vitality. In particular, it was claimed that art revivifies emotions that are custom-jaded, suppressed or held in abeyance; that it provides a remedy for over-objectifying attitudes, through offering artefacts that are made precisely to be the objects of emotion.

I can conceive various directions from which criticisms of this claim are likely to come. First, a preliminary remark. On p. 490 above, Hampshire was quoted as saying: 'The price of full rationality is a separation of argument, and of systematic understanding, from the primary emotions'. Such a remark (in isolation) may suggest, though it does not entail, a misleadingly sharp dichotomy of reason and emotion. If our account is at all on right lines, conceptualizing, interpreting—i.e. activities of reason—remain essential features of emotion-experience itself. Furthermore, intellectual activities can carry their own, often powerful, emotional charge, even if the emotions involved cannot be called 'primary', instinctive ones. But Hampshire (and Schiller) may none the less be correct in saying that some intellectual and technical activities can coexist

with a greatly attenuated emotional response to the objects of our study and attention, and may even encourage the attenuation. In what follows, I shall tentatively suppose that to be true.

We can anticipate objections of two contrasted kinds. If it is true that art elicits powerful emotional responses, can such response be classed reliably as *educative* of the emotions? Can one be confident that it is not equally liable to be emotionally *corrupting*? The point is familiar, but it cannot be prevented from arising in a study of art and education. Is it true, in any case, that when art is properly understood, its resources properly appropriated, it functions primarily as an emotion-stimulus? A good deal of twentieth-century aesthetics strongly suggest the contrary.

No one denies that art can be used (misused) in order to arouse all manner of emotions. Erotic literature can be taken simply as pornography: so can passages of Scripture. Sadism can be nourished on an anthology of Renaissance revenge-tragedies. Ability to excite specific strong emotions, however, is only contingently and haphazardly correlated with aesthetic merit.

It is not at all obvious, moreover, that if art is able in some way to give vitality to the affective life, it must be through the converting of particular selected emotions into life-emotions. There are other possibilities. Schiller, for instance, wrote of the 'equanimity and freedom of the spirit, combined with power and vigour' which to him was the mood with which a genuine work of art should leave us. He added: if afterwards 'we find ourselves disposed to prefer some one particular mode of feeling or action, but . . . disinclined for another, this may serve as infallible proof that we have not had a *purely aesthetic experience*'.<sup>17</sup> Schiller was realistic enough to recognize this purity as a goal never fully realized in practice. We can put the point like this. The emotional enlivening proper to the arts may be far less a matter of stimulating particular, specific emotions in the spectator than of dispelling his emotional torpor and inculcating an alert, mobile, exploratory attitude to the play of feeling in the work of art as a whole. All this can certainly be transferred from art-experience to life-experience, and without the fragmentation of the work of art that is usually involved in treating it as a mere stimulus of, say, hate or fear.

This way of putting it might elicit some support even from writers who give much more stress to the formal features of art works than they do to emotion-evocation. When such writers come to describe their experience of art—synoptically grasping the work as a unity in which the quality of any one part is determined by all the other parts—they are describing an activity at the opposite pole from the sluggish or coldly analytical. They speak rather of mobility and

alertness of mind, of faculties at full stretch: and they may even see part of the value of the tight, formal organization of a work of art as lying in its power to facilitate such intense and affectively vital activity.<sup>18</sup>

Despite all that has been said, it would be misleading to suggest that the mere presence of beautiful objects is a sufficient condition of emotional vitality for everyone all the time; and the initial account may be further faulted if it suggested the contrary.

Alongside the story of J. S. Mill's emotion-reviving has to be set that of Coleridge in 'dejection'. Neither art nor natural beauty could guarantee emotional vitality (or 'joy' as he called it) to Coleridge. A pre-existing joy was a necessary condition of aesthetic responsiveness. That is to say, recalcitrant factors of individual psychology, as well as social and technical pressures towards objectivity, can lead to the withdrawal of emotion. But to pursue that topic—to do more than just acknowledge it—would take us quite beyond the philosophy of art and of education. Instead, I shall end on a more distinctly philosophical note: for philosophical arguments and beliefs can also cause or partly cause the withdrawal of emotion.

Recall again William James's invitation to imagine a world from which all emotional quality has been abstracted: with it goes all 'significance, character, expression', and so on. Someone may react by saying, 'that, then, is how the world *really* is: the rest (value, emotion, expression) is colourful illusion, decoration, veneer that we apply to it'. One who even dimly feels like saying this will not give a high place on his agenda to the education of the emotions, or to the arts as furthering that end. For such a person the power of art to revivify feeling may be thwarted or sabotaged by the persistent thought—art masks the truth and seeks to undermine our loyalty to it.

What could be said in reply to him? First, consider the problem of discriminating between 1. the value of what is ontologically prior (the world minus its emotional colouring, as fundamental), and 2. the value of what has been worked upon by the energies of man. Even if the emotional and expressive qualities belong to the latter (to the interpreted, fashioned or projected), it does not follow that the person with most integrity and the most sensitive intellectual conscience must opt to live in a world stripped again of all we have contributed. In any case, it could hardly be called 'living'. The enterprise would require, for thoroughness, the stripping off also of all concepts, the abandoning of language, the withholding of all that we bring to the perception of a moment from memory-derived experience. If the enterprise *could* be carried through, it would amount to a form of self-destruction. Could one have an intellectual obligation to bring that about? Could one even speak of 'obligation' here

at all—without inconsistency? To feel an intellectual obligation to hold to the austere, de-emotionalized picture of the world as the 'fundamentally true' picture is to feel an *obligation*—it is to have an interest and to make an evaluation: and that is to say—not to carry through a programme of removing these from the world.

Although this promised to be a field for philosophical analysis, and not a matter of individual psychology only, it seems the two cannot be kept entirely apart. There is a wide difference of attitude, only partly amenable to philosophical persuasion, between two types of person. The first type feels the life of the emotions to be downgraded and vilified, if it turns out that non-human nature itself does not possess emotional qualities, or acknowledge values, or (in a more grandiloquent idiom) manifest a spiritual life. We can see him in the Romantic poet who seeks confirmation or endorsement of his emotion in the metaphysics of post-Kantian idealism or neoplatonism. The second type admits that emotional qualities are essentially projected by man; but he is not at all downcast about this. He finds it an interesting, even an astonishing, fact that (in James's phrase) 'the world's materials lend their surface passively to all our projectings, and take on inexhaustibly many aspects, expressions, lights, as they do so'. These endless transformations of aspect are among our most distinctive and valuable contributions to the world. The proper account is not in terms of a masking or concealing of the alien, colourless reality, but of exercising a basic form of human creativity.

I have done little more here than set against each other two rhetorics—the one rhetoric disparaging, and the other defending, subjectivity and the life of the emotions. It would take more than a chapter to argue out the point between them, and conclusiveness may not be attainable. One thing, however, is clear. If educating the emotions involves first of all taking the life of the emotions with seriousness—and surely it does—then the analysis and appraisal of these rhetorics must be a vital and continuing part of its task."

- 6 *Art as Experience*, Allen & Unwin, 1934, pp. 67f.
- 7 *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Longmans, 1902, p. 150.
- 8 *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, eds E. M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, O.U.P., 1968, letter 6, para. 6.
- 9 *The Morality of Scholarship*, ed. M. Black, O.U.P., 1967, p. 36.
- 10 Quoted in G. Steiner, *Language and Silence*, Faber, 1967, p. 88.
- 11 *A L'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*, Paris, 1929, II, 2, p. 77;  
*Within a Budding Grove*, trans. C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, I, pp. 326f.
- 12 T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*.
- 13 *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, xv.
- 14 *Macbeth*, II, iii. Someone may argue that in any case the examples of objectless emotions are more properly instances of *moods*, and that to have an object is in fact a necessary condition of being an emotion. Our vocabulary is certainly fluid in this area. We can mark the differences between, say, an obsessive, objectless melancholy and a fear of being arrested for a specific offence, by calling the first a matter of mood and the second an emotion in the full sense. There are similarities, however, as well as differences between the two sorts of case. If it is accepted that emotion may be discriminatively expressed by a literary presentation of its object, then we can hardly avoid being perplexed whether there can be discrimination among affective states, when no object exists.
- 15 G. H. Bantock writes interestingly on this general topic, in his *Education, Culture and the Emotions*, Faber, 1967. And he finds apposite quotations in Stendhal, on the 'extent to which the realities we inhabit are themselves in part the creation of the books we have read, of the mythical formulations we have encountered' (p. 97). The present paper is indebted to Bantock's study at several points.
- 16 'A Propos . . .', op. cit., p. 493.
- 17 Op. cit., letter 22, para. 3.
- 18 This is not primarily an essay in aesthetics; and I am not here concerned to decide between rival aesthetic theories. It needs to be said, however, that I have not been presupposing an 'instrumental' theory of art, according to which the chief (or only) value of art is its power to communicate emotion. The powers of art are multiple; and they are interrelated in complex ways.
- 19 Further bibliographical notes (some, but not all, of the following have been drawn upon in the chapter): J. Hillman, *Emotion*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960; J. C. Gosling, 'Emotion and object', *Philosophical Review*, 1965; G. Pitcher, 'Emotion', *Mind*, 1965; J. Benson, 'Emotion and expression', *Philosophical Review*, 1967; M. Tanner, 'Philosophy and criticism', *Oxford Review*, 1967; G. D. Marshall, 'On being affected', *Mind*, 1968; H. Morris-Jones, H. Osborne and R. W. Hepburn, *Aesthetics in the Modern World*, Thames & Hudson, 1968, pp. 81-124.

# Education and human development

28

R. S. Peters

## Introduction

We often talk of people developing mathematically or as artists, and could give criteria for this if asked without much difficulty. Subject-specialists in schools and Colleges of Education tend to approach education from this point of view and understand each other fairly well. But they often come into conflict with others, usually in Education Departments, who argue that what is important is the development of the child as a person, and that a subject-centred type of approach to education is both artificial and a hindrance to personal development.

Two problems arise from this contrast. First, by what criteria are we to determine that someone is developing as a person in distinction from mathematically, scientifically and so on? Second, how are these more specialized forms of development related to personal development? This is not simply a speculative problem that it might be fun to solve; it is one of considerable practical importance. For in Colleges of Education and University Departments of Education there is too often a yawning gulf between work done under the heading of 'education' and work done in 'main subjects' and 'curriculum courses'. Also the conflicts and tensions between those who approach education from the stand-point of 'subjects' and those who approach it from the stand-point of 'child development' arise, in part, from an inability to reconcile these two approaches and to develop a more unified approach to education. This might be facilitated if we could get clearer about some of the concepts which lie behind our discussion of these issues—especially that of 'human development'. It is the hope that philosophical analysis might contribute to such a reconciliation that has prompted me to write this paper.

## The concept of 'development'

Let us begin by having a look, then, at the concept of 'development' with a view to getting clearer about the way in which it is applied



when talking about human beings. It suggests sequential changes of an irreversible sort through time, the direction of which is seen in relation to some outcome which is characteristic of that which develops. Ernest Nagel gives much tighter criteria for the use of 'development' which are taken from a range of cases in which what is potential becomes actual—e.g. cases such as the development of a photograph or oak-tree.<sup>1</sup> He therefore suggests the criteria of 1. some pre-existing structure, 2. processes which either 'unfold' or are more actively assisted by outside agencies and which are irreversible, and 3. some end-state which is the culmination of the process. In biology, due to the influence of the theory of evolution, this end-state was thought of as involving an increased capacity for self-maintenance, and as characterized by an increased complexity and differentiation of functions which are integrated at a higher level of functioning. There are some forms of development, however, such as that of a theme in music, to which this does not seem to apply.

There is little difficulty in using these tight criteria when applying the concept to human beings at the physical level. The bodies of men, together with their basic biological functionings, develop in this way. The question is, however, whether this concept can be applied with these criteria at the mental level. Let us, therefore, consider each of these criteria in turn, not because they can be applied to mental development in any precise way, but because by seeing where they do and do not fit, we may in the process become clearer about the main contours of 'human development'. For this, after all, is the point of any conceptual analysis—not to end up by triumphantly producing logically necessary conditions for the use of a term, but to try out criteria as a way of getting clearer about the similarities and differences between things.

### *Pre-existing structure*

The notion of mental structure is not altogether perspicuous. 'Mental' is presumably to be understood in terms of modes of consciousness such as understanding, wanting and being affected. To talk of mental structure is, therefore, to suggest at least that the content of these different modes of consciousness is structured in some way and that they are related in various ways to each other. Both suggestions are obviously true. In understanding things, for instance, there are rules for classifying them as things of various sorts and for interpreting their changes—e.g. the causal principle. In wanting things we impose a means-end structure on experience. Modes of consciousness are also internally related to each other. If I want

something—e.g. another job—I want it under some description that involves my beliefs—for instance that the work will be more interesting, or that I will not have to sit on so many committees. There are also different levels of mental structure, as we shall see, with characteristic modes of functioning. If a child has reached the level of understanding change in terms of the causal principle, all sorts of wants can be satisfied that were not previously possible for him.

The case for there being at the human level some kind of mental structure, which is subject to change, is, therefore, straightforward. But whether there is a *pre-existing* mental structure is quite another matter. To discuss that possibility would take us into the heart of the controversy about innate ideas that has ranged from the time of Plato, through Descartes, Locke, Leibniz and Kant, up to the recent speculations on the subject by Chomsky. But there is really no need to go into this if we wish to talk with good conscience about mental development; for the insistence that structure should be pre-existing is plausible only in certain favoured cases, mainly in botany and biology. We can talk perfectly intelligibly of 'industrial development' in cases, such as that of a new town, where there was nothing resembling a structure of industry in the place to start with. Indeed there might not even have been a town. It is perfectly true that the child development movement in educational theory has tried to assimilate the development of a human being to that of a plant with the metaphor of the kindergarten. But few would now support this inner ripening or unfolding type of theory, and it would seem rather arbitrary to insist that, unless the first condition of pre-existing structure is satisfied, the concept of 'development' is not applicable to the human case.

### *Sequential processes*

Nagel's second criterion of sequential processes of an irreversible sort, on the other hand, seems much more central to the concept of 'development'. How are such sequences to be understood if we are talking about mental development? They are, first of all, manifestly different from those involved at the level of physical growth. An acorn, on its way to becoming an oak-tree, goes through various changes in physical shape and structure, with accompanying modes of functioning, which can be observed to occur in sequence. The changes occur because of the physical and chemical reactions between the organism and its environment. Social influences do little to shape its growth. Acorns do not respond to commands, instructions, explanations and the like. At the human level, on the other

hand, stages of development are to be characterized in terms of the level of understanding, wanting, etc., which has been reached, and the ways in which an individual passes through stages has to be described in terms of his understanding of rules and roles which are passed on largely by language. Changes from one level to another cannot be described in mechanical terms at all and even the biological model, used by Piaget, of assimilation and accommodation, can be used only metaphorically. For when a child takes in a novel happening by 'assimilating' it to his existing conceptual structure he does not literally assimilate it in the way in which an organism assimilates food. And the process of accommodating, of changing his concepts because the novel happening is too discrepant with his existing structure, is not literally the same as that of accommodation at the biological level.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, although the physical environment of a plant influences its development, it is in no sense constitutive of it. The plant does not become like the soil or the sun when it takes it into its system. In the mental case, on the other hand, much of the *content* of development is provided by the social environment. Children model themselves on others. Also what we call teaching processes have in common the fact that some sort of content—a belief, a rule, a way of behaving, is displayed, indicated or marked out in some way or other for the learner to make his own. The phrase 'make his own' is also significant in the human case. For human beings develop in part because of their decisions and choices. They make themselves to a certain extent. This way of talking is quite inappropriate at the plant or animal level.

*Kohlberg's cognitive stage theory.* It might be thought that the part played by such social influences is so overwhelming in the human case that there is little alternative but to go along with Marx's aphorism that 'it is not the consciousness of man that determines his existence—rather it is his social existence that determines his consciousness'. But the question is not whether to go along with it, but how far and in respect to what. To explain what I mean, consider Kohlberg's claim that there are invariant sequences in development which seem to hold in any culture. He produces evidence, for instance, to show that in any culture children begin by being unable to distinguish dreams from real events. They then grasp that dreams are not real, then that they cannot be seen by others and take place inside the dreamer, then that they are immaterial events produced by the dreamer, like thoughts.<sup>3</sup> He makes two points about this sequence which, he claims, hold for all proper developmental sequences. First he claims that this sequence cannot be

fully explained in terms of the teaching of adults; for if adults taught anything about dreams they would tend to use concepts about them appropriate to a much later stage, which would not explain how children go through the earlier stages. Also the same sequence can be observed in cultures where adults have different beliefs about dreams. Secondly, Kohlberg argues that the stages of development in relation to dreams could not have a different order. It depends upon the relationships to each other of concepts such as 'unreal', 'internal', 'immaterial', which it would take too long to explicate.

Piaget has, of course, extensively illustrated this thesis about invariant order depending upon relationships between concepts in the case of maths and elementary physics, and, to a more limited extent, in the moral sphere. Kohlberg himself has elaborated this thesis in the field of morals. He holds that, though there is a difference between cultures in the *content* of moral beliefs, the development of their *form* is a cultural invariant. In other words, though there is variation between cultures about whether or not people should, for example, be thrifty or have sexual relationships outside marriage, there are cross-cultural uniformities relating to how any such rules are conceived—e.g. as ways of avoiding punishment, as laid down by authority, and so on. Children, Kohlberg claims, start by seeing rules as dependent upon power and external compulsion; they then see them as instrumental to rewards and to the satisfaction of their needs; then as ways of obtaining social approval and esteem; then as upholding some ideal order, and finally as articulations of social principles necessary for living together with others. Varying contents given to rules are fitted into invariant forms of conceiving of rules. Of course in many cultures there is no progression through to the final stages; the rate of development will be different in different cultures, and in the same culture there are great individual differences. All this can be granted and explained. But his main point is that this sequence in levels of conceiving of rules is constitutive of moral development and that it is a cultural invariant. Also, because of the conceptual relations involved, which are connected with stages of role-taking, it could not occur in any other order.<sup>4</sup>

How, then, does Kohlberg think that this type of development occurs if it is not the result of teaching? He rejects maturation theories as non-starters except in the case of abilities such as walking. He also rejects three types of socialization hypothesis. In the first place he claims that a whole mass of empirical studies have failed to confirm the findings of the psycho-analytic school.<sup>5</sup> There are no correlations, for instance, between parental modes of handling infantile drives and later moral behaviour or attitudes. There are no correlations between the amount of reward given and moral

variables. Findings on parental attitudes give no clear support for the theory that early identifications are central to a moral orientation. The only established correlation, he claims, is between what he calls 'induction', which often goes along with the withdrawal of love, and moral guilt. By 'induction' he means cognitive stimulation connected with the awareness of the consequences of actions. Similarly there is a correlation between maternal warmth and the development of conscience. But this operates, he maintains, by providing only a climate for learning.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly he maintains that the evidence from the classic Hartshorne May study shows overwhelmingly that the theory of habit-generalization, put forward by psychologists with a learning theory type of orientation, has no validity. What came out of this mammoth enquiry was that traits such as honesty are situation specific. Moral learning of this sort can bring about only specific forms of behaviour conformity. It cannot bring about predictable behaviour over a wide range of situations, such as is found in a person who has emerged to the principled stage of morality. He also claims that learning theorists have produced no evidence whatever about the influence of early forms of habit training on later adult behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

Thirdly Kohlberg rejects Piaget's hypothesis, which he got from Durkheim, that the peer-group plays a decisive role in moral development in the sense that its norms are internalized by the individual. There is a correlation between the development of a principled morality and peer-group participation. But Kohlberg argues that this is because of the stimulation which such a group provides for the individual to reflect upon situations.<sup>8</sup>

How then does Kohlberg think that these Kantian categories, which provide forms of conceiving of rules at the different stages, evolve? For he rejects Kant's own view that they are innate moulds into which specific experiences are fitted.<sup>9</sup> He argues that they develop as a result of interaction between the child and his physical and social environment. To understand how this happens it is necessary, therefore, to analyse first the universal structural features of the environment; secondly the logical relationships involved in the concepts; and thirdly the relationship between the particular child's conceptual scheme and the type of experience with which he is confronted. For development to take place there must be an optimal amount of discrepancy between the two. He amasses a vast array of evidence, for instance from the experiments done on Piaget's conservation hypothesis, to substantiate his claim that these shifts in forms of conception do not come about by specific teaching.<sup>10</sup>

This interactionist theory of development is applied to the moral sphere. He thinks that the stages of development here represent

culturally invariant sequences in the child's conception of himself and his social world. 'It implies, then, that there are some universal structural dimensions in the social world, as there are in the physical world.' . . . These dimensions are universal because the basic structure of social and moral action is the universal structure provided by the existence of a self in a world composed of other selves who are both like the self and different from it.' He follows Baldwin and Mead in ascribing great importance to role-taking and the dawning of reciprocity in the development of this understanding of the social situation in which we are placed. Social and moral understanding develop *pari-passu* with other forms of cognitive development. And just as contact with the physical environment gradually stimulates a child to classify it in terms of objects having causal relations with other objects in space and time, to make the distinction between what is real and what is apparent, and gradually to grasp more abstract ways of introducing order into the world, so also in the social and moral case the child is gradually led to grasp principles, especially that of justice, which must obtain if individuals are to live together and to satisfy their claims as social beings, who are both similar to and different from others. The stages in development are stages in the *forms* of thought about social relationships rather than stages in content, e.g. the change from considering actions in terms of their actual consequences to considering them in terms of their intended consequences.<sup>11</sup>

In support of his thesis Kohlberg claims that the main factors which have been shown to correlate with the development of a principled, predictable morality are intelligence, moral knowledge (i.e. knowledge of the rules of a society), the tendency to anticipate future events, the ability to maintain focused attention, the capacity to control unsocialized fantasies and self esteem. The major consistencies in moral conduct represent decision-making capacities rather than fixed behaviour traits.<sup>12</sup>

*General features of mental development.* I have dwelt on this particular case of moral development for a number of reasons. First it illustrates well the way in which mental development is to be conceived. It is not a matter of how much is known or of individual idiosyncrasies of self-expression; it is rather a matter of progression along a public mode of experience whose stages can be charted by reference to the form of experience as distinct from its particular content. The order of stages could not be otherwise than they are for logical reasons in that the later presupposes the earlier and is related hierarchically to it. For instance one could not conceive of the theory construction characteristic of the hypothetico-deductive stage of

scientific thought preceding the more mundane classifying of the stage of concrete operations in Piaget's account of scientific development; one could not conceive of his autonomous stage of morality preceding his transcendental stage.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly I have selected the moral mode of development rather than more obvious ones, such as the mathematical and scientific, for the very reason that these features of development might be thought to be confined to these 'intellectual' areas of development. But they are not so confined. The moral can be charted as a universal form of human development just as can the scientific and the mathematical. How many, then, are there of these modes of experience in addition to these three? They would have to be distinguished by reference to distinctive structures of concepts and types of truth criteria which make objectivity possible. A case could obviously be made for the aesthetic mode. Then there would be the mode of interpersonal understanding which employs concepts such as 'intention', 'decision', 'seeing means to ends' and the like. History would be a particular branch of this together with some parts of what is usually classified under psychology and social science. A case, too, might be made for a mode of religious experience, though this has not yet been clearly differentiated from the moral and the scientific. There is, then, the whole area of practical knowledge, of knowing how, and skills, which has special problems of its own, but which is developmentally very important.

The third feature of development, which can be illustrated very clearly by the moral case, is the way in which the different modes of experience support each other. Moral development, for instance, goes along with the development of interpersonal understanding and is supported by a generalized understanding of the causes and consequences of actions. Science and mathematics support and interpenetrate each other in a similar way.

Finally Kohlberg's theory of the factors which influence moral development illustrate what could be an important point for teaching. He claims that mental development is neither a matter of unfolding what is within nor of stamping in something from without. It is rather a matter of the interaction of a mind, which is to be characterized in terms of its capacity for classifying and discriminating the environment, and the situation in which human beings are placed. Much of the *content* of experience is, of course, culture-bound and passed on by example and instruction. But its form, by reference to which stages of development are characterized, cannot be externally imposed. It is something that the individual has to develop for himself with appropriate stimulation from others and from typical concrete situations. Kohlberg quotes evidence from

demand that certain central claims should be spelt out in more detail. The general outline of development stages is acceptable enough and enough has been said to illustrate how mental development can be conceived under the second criterion of 'sequential processes'. It is time to proceed to the third criterion of 'development', that of the 'end-state'.

### *The end-state*

The notion of an end-state, when applied to human development, is a problematic one. Within each mode of experience we can, of course, talk in a provisional way about people being more or less developed, e.g. mathematically, morally, scientifically. In so doing we would be speaking relatively to the standards characterizing the stages which have so far been reached; but it would be rash to say that within any of them a final stage had been reached. So the notion of a more or less fixed terminating point of development, like that of a mature oak-tree, which marks the culmination of a mode of development, would be one that would have to be treated with caution, to put it mildly.

But would we go on to say that any content can be given to the notion of human development as applied to man as a person as distinct from in particular forms of development? We might be inclined to say, using the biological criterion, that a man who had achieved some integration of differentiated forms of experience would be more developed than a man whose consciousness was not so differentiated. Surely, it might be argued, a man who sees the world 'whole' in a way which confuses the scientific and moral notions of lawfulness is less developed than a post-seventeenth-century man who has distinguished these different forms of lawfulness and who can combine them in a judgment about what ought to be done, e.g. about smoking, in which scientific generalizations are used. Surely, too, we might say that a man whose understanding had progressed a long way in most of the different modes of experience is more developed than a man whose development is confined to one and who has missed out on most of the others. But what sorts of remarks would these be? We might be committed to saying that a man like David Hume, whom we might regard as being reasonably well-developed in this all round sort of way, was more developed as a human being than Oliver Cromwell, whose consciousness was not very differentiated, or than Gandhi, who rather missed out on science, mathematics and aesthetic awareness. We might say that a polymath was more developed than a disciplined engineer. And these would seem rather bizarre sorts of things to say.



*A normative concept?* What underlies our feelings of uneasiness about such remarks? It might be argued that 'developed', when used at this level, can never be used purely descriptively; it suggests also some kind of approval. A man can be developed mathematically or scientifically, and this can be related to the standards defining the stages through which people pass. But we still might not value mathematical development very highly, if at all. But, it might be said, when we talk about human development generally, this has to be related to some valutive conception of man. In developmental theories these value judgments have either been overt, as in the case of Arnold Gesell, who explicitly took as his paradigm of human development an ideal based on a small sample of what he considered to be outstanding democratic American citizens; or the ideal can be implicit, as in the case of Freud who, as Philip Rieff has shown<sup>16</sup> presupposed an ideal of man as a cautious egoist, a prudent devotee of the nicely calculated more or less in the realm of satisfactions. Freud also, because of his great interest in interpersonal understanding, and because he regarded art and religion as compensatory activities, implicitly weighted his conception of human development in favour of the development of certain modes of experience.

These examples show that some writers in the developmental tradition have in fact, either explicitly or implicitly, presupposed standards of human development that are normative. But must this be so? Could not something be made of an alternative, more Greek type of approach, which singled out certain human excellences that evoke admiration in us rather than approval? These might be held up as examples of levels of development which human beings can attain by striving and by the exercise of abilities which are distinctively human—mainly connected with the use of reason. But they might not necessarily be normative in the sense of being types of functioning that are required of or to be sought after by every human being. Examples would be thinking critically, being creative and autonomous; displaying foresight, strength of character and integrity.

*Human excellences and personal development.* The distinctiveness of these excellences as objects of admiration rather than of approval can be accounted for in part by their higher-order adverbial type of status. By this I mean that they are connected with the manner in which we conduct various activities. We discuss or think critically, we paint or cook creatively and integrity is shown in our moral life or in a work of art. If, however, the activity in which these qualities of mind are displayed is one of which we disapprove, we can retain what we sometimes call a sneaking admiration for the manner in which it is

done. Machiavelli, for instance, obviously had more than a sneaking admiration for the foresight and ingenuity of Cesar Borgia in inviting all his enemies to dinner and putting them to death in their cups. We may retain some admiration for a colleague's critical acumen even if it is being exercised mainly in scoring points off someone. We might have a faint feeling of admiration for someone's creativity even if it were exercised in devising subtle and imaginative tortures and sexual perversions. In the moral sphere we approve of straightforward virtues such as courage, fairness, benevolence and the like. But we admire people who display higher-order traits such as strength of will in persisting in some virtue like honesty in the face of temptation and ridicule. We also admire people for their integrity when they are impervious to corruption and 'double-mindedness', for their autonomy in proceeding with a course of action in the face of social pressure. But strength of will can also be exhibited by a man who ruthlessly pursues his own advantage; a man can display great autonomy in becoming a train robber. In such cases our approval is withdrawn but our admiration may remain, even though it may be dampened a little. Integrity is more difficult in this respect; for we do not seem to use the word of a man who sticks to principles which we regard as immoral. But the general point is unaffected: we can admire a person if he displays some human excellence in an enterprise even though we disapprove of the enterprise.

These general qualities of mind, which I have termed human excellences, are extremely important in our concept of 'personal development' because they are intimately connected with what it means to be a 'person'. I have argued elsewhere<sup>17</sup> that there are important differences between being just an individual centre of consciousness and being a person. 'Being a person' is connected conceptually with having what I call an assertive point of view, with evaluation, decision and choice, and with being, to a certain extent, an individual who determines his own destiny by his choices. It is connected in other words, with the development of reason in its various aspects. We are all persons in that normally we have a potentiality for developing these capacities, but human excellences seem to consist in developing such capacities to a considerable degree. Critical thought is a development of evaluation, autonomy of choice, creativity of the attempt to launch out on one's own and to impose one's own stamp on a product; integrity is shown in sticking to one's principles in the face of temptation, and strength of will in holding fast to a policy that has been adopted as one's own. We often say of someone 'He is a real person.' We are not using this phrase to stress the fact that he is a person in the sense in which any normal human being is. Rather we are drawing attention to the

it; he will not take authorities too seriously; he will be determined to test things for himself. But different contents can be put into this general formula depending whether the issue is a scientific, philosophical or aesthetic one. The criterion of truth may be different and so may the testing procedures; but 'being critical' can be understood in terms of this general form of proceeding which has a variable content. Of course a given individual may not be very good in all the spheres which he approaches in this way; for he may lack the necessary training and skill. In a similar way we can say that a person is generally intelligent in that he always approaches situations by trying to relate what he is doing to some overall purpose; but he may lack the skill to bring off what he is trying to do. An intelligent carpenter or golfer may be too unskilled to be a good carpenter or golfer. But meaning can be attached to 'intelligent' in these contexts which does not depend on the specificity of the activities in which a person tries his hand, or on the skill with which he actually performs in them. The same is true of qualities of mind such as being critical and creative.

What does seem to follow, however, is that these general qualities of mind, which have been called excellences, cannot be thought of as general 'powers of the mind' of a person in separation from the modes of experience. Thus personal development is not inconsistent with development in the different modes of experience. On the contrary, it presupposes them. These excellences provide, as it were, a kind of h.c.f. of personal development, to use a *façon de parler*, which cuts across the distinct modes of experience. But they can only be exercised in the modes of experience.

*Personal development and mental health.* The same sort of metaphor could also be used to sketch a level of general development as a person which might constitute a kind of l.c.m. Aristotle maintained that man's essence is to be rational and part of what he meant was that, given a normal environment, there is a potentiality in man which will become actual in an ability to use his reason in the sense of planning means to ends and regulating his desires. This is very much what Freud means by the development of the ego, which he took also to give direction to the stages of development. Freud saw clearly that this ability to delay gratification and to plan means to ends is connected with the development of the perceptual apparatus and the working of thought according to the reality principle. Piaget mapped much more carefully what is involved in the development of this basic conception of reality, and the stages at which children develop the forms of thought in which objects are seen in a space-time framework in causal relations with other objects. He also traced the

development of the means-end framework in the sphere of action, of the awareness of another as both similar to and different from oneself and of the intentions and purposes immanent in his overtly observable acts. Without concepts such as these, the development of reason and of a sense of reality would be inconceivable.<sup>19</sup> And without this our potentiality for becoming persons could not develop.

Now in *any* culture, whatever the group or individual ideal of human development, there is a certain minimum level of functioning that is expected of anyone. The individual has to carry out tasks connected with the household and his occupations; he has to come up to some minimum level of understanding of his environment and other people if he is to be viable in any culture. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>20</sup> most forms of mental illness can be related to failures in the basic capacities of man as a rational animal which are necessary for carrying out these simple functions. There are, of course, cultures in which mild deviations in these areas are tolerated and even treated with reverential awe; but if an individual is permanently unable to carry out effectively any of his practical purposes, is perpetually hallucinated, schizophrenic or subject to paranoid delusions, he would be regarded as stunted or deficient in any culture. A strong case can therefore be made for saying that any concept of personal development must include some reference to the rationality of man defined in this minimum sense. This provides the basic form of human experience without which any more idiosyncratic forms of development could not be sustained.

In brief, if we ask the question about the end-state of personal development, as distinct from particular modes of development, it might be possible to produce a very formal account of both an h.c.f. and an l.c.m. of personal development. The latter consists in maintaining the basic structure of man as a rational animal; the former consists in developing these rational capacities to the full. But personal development, as conceived of in these ways, is not distinct from development within the various modes of experience; rather it consists in the development of qualities of mind that are exercised in these modes of experience. We thus have an answer to the problems with which we started both of the criteria for personal development and of its relationship to more specialized forms of development.

### **Too cognitive an approach?**

It might be said that this approach to human development is altogether too cognitive. But this would be to misunderstand both my position and the nature of the human mind; for the point is that states of mind which are often thought to be non-cognitive, such as

emotions and motives, cannot be identified without reference to cognition, to our understanding of our situation. To feel jealous, for instance, is to pick out some features of a situation rather than others, namely those which suggest that someone else is after something or someone to which or whom one thinks one has some sort of special claim. To act out of guilt, shame, remorse and envy presupposes seeing our own acts and those of others in a certain light. Some of these 'passions' are intimately connected with highly specialized modes of experience, such as the passion for truth involved in science, or the feeling for form involved in aesthetic experience. But others, which are connected with the interpersonal and moral modes of experience, are much more evenly distributed among us—e.g. ambition, shame, envy, respect, indignation, pride. The development of motives and emotions is inseparable from the development of modes of experience each of which has its distinctive cognitive stages.

The tendency to disregard the importance of cognition in this area has led to the neglect of the specific features of interpersonal understanding as a mode of experience which is of manifest importance in the recognition of emotions and motives in oneself and others. This is usually regarded as rather a murky field about which little that is clear and precise can be said. It has thus largely been occupied by those who talk in a mystical way about 'I' and 'thou', and by devotees of various brands of psycho-analysis. The result is that the development of stages in interpersonal understanding remains uncharted in any precise way; so also does the development of emotions and motives. Very little has been done in the area of beliefs and conceptual prerequisites. What is presupposed, for instance, before people can act out of remorse or out of respect? What other beliefs and concepts does a person have to have before these ways of regarding other people and himself are possible for him? What are the *connexions* between the various emotions and stages in the development of the moral and interpersonal modes of experience? This specific mode of development should be studied in the same sort of way as the scientific, mathematical and moral modes have been by Piaget and others.

A more precise approach to the development of the mode of interpersonal understanding is of particular importance in the context of what I have called the l.c.m. of personal development, the level of functioning connected with a minimum notion of mental health. If I had more time I would argue that what Freud and others have shown is the *connexion* between certain forms of malfunctioning and mistakes in *belief* about ourselves and other people and our relationship to them. Perhaps, for instance, we have the view that others are

always threatening us or conspiring against us when, in fact, most of them are just going about their business with hardly a thought in their heads about us. A better understanding of stages in development of interpersonal understanding should help educators and parents to know not only what are the crucial stages through which young children have to pass, but also what types of situation to avoid if they wish to minimize occasions for stunted or warped development in this sphere. There is then the further question of the extent to which the study of various subjects at school can contribute to the stimulation of this form of development, so that the individual can come to see himself and others in a more objective and less self-referential manner.

### **Development and the curriculum**

We thus come to the question of the relationship of human development to the curriculum; for a curriculum is a set of learning experiences structured with the intention of bringing about certain objectives. If objectives were thought of developmentally there would have to be careful thought both about the stages of development within each mode of experience and about the opportunities provided by the different modes of experience for the encouragement of those human excellences which are constitutive of personal development.

#### *Specific forms of development*

What would this imply in more concrete terms? We would cease to take traditional school subjects any more seriously than we took the four-sided child of the child development textbooks who develops physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. Philosophers would have to get together with the various subject specialists and, having distinguished what distinct modes of experience there are, according to types of concepts, truth criteria and methods of testing, they would have to consider how the various school subjects contribute to them. Some traditional school subjects, such as classics, involve more than one mode of experience—e.g. aesthetic, moral, interpersonal (including historical), whereas others, such as botany, involve only one. The stages in the different modes of experience would have to be charted systematically in terms of the logical structure of the categories and concepts involved in them. Through the work of Piaget and Kohlberg much has already been done along these lines in the scientific, mathematical and moral spheres. But the stages of the practical, the interpersonal, the aesthetic and the religious, are still comparatively uncharted.

Psychologists would then have to be called in to help discover

what types of content seem best suited to stimulate development from stage to stage and what teaching methods are most effective, though choice of content would also be determined by other objectives. This kind of approach might lead to a reconciliation between those who emphasize 'discovery' or 'leading out' methods in education and those who stress the importance of training and instruction. The former types of method might be most appropriate in so far as we are concerned with the *form* of understanding characterizing the various levels of development; the latter might be more apposite in so far as we are concerned with the content. It is obvious, too, that generalizations about teaching methods would vary from mode to mode. For instance, there are great differences between learning practical skills and learning mathematics. But nevertheless some generalizations might apply to all modes—e.g. about physical conditions favouring learning, about conditions falling under the old laws of effect and exercise, about obstacles to learning and about individual differences. It would take a lot of time to explicate precisely what would be logical and what would be psychological questions in each particular mode of development. But the crucial point is that the best ways of teaching could be determined only by active co-operation between what we now call subject-specialists, philosophers and psychologists.

### *Personal development*

Suppose, however, that the curriculum was looked at not only from the point of view of its contribution to the different modes of experience, but also from the point of view of its contribution to personal development in respect of what I have termed the l.c.m. and h.c.f. Could any judgments of priority be made about the different modes of experiences?

In relation to the l.c.m. of personal development it might be argued that the mode of interpersonal understanding is of crucial importance because of its close connexion with mental health. Subjects, therefore, such as literature, history, geography, branches of psychology and social science, human biology, classics and games might therefore be thought to be of particular importance because of the contributions which they might make in this area. This however, would be an *a priori* sort of claim. For as far as I know there is no research which shows that the humanities do in fact have any influence of this sort. But neither is there much evidence to suggest that they are often taught with the development of interpersonal understanding as one of their main objectives.

With regard to the development of those excellences which constitute what I have called the h.c.f. of personal development, it

would be difficult to sustain a case for priorities. For it has been argued that these qualities of mind can be displayed in different modes of experience. It might be argued that there is more scope for the development of critical thought in science and history than there is in art, that creativeness is more at home in art than it is in an elaborated science such as chemistry. But this would depend upon how these subjects are conceived and taught. A special case might, perhaps, be made for the humanities in respect of the development of autonomy. It might be argued that literature, drama, history, etc., are of special importance in enlarging the imagination about the various possibilities open to man. They might help people to become more vividly aware of the situation in which they are placed as human beings, enlarge their range of choice and provide information to make choices better informed.

The important point to stress, however, is that though these excellences are general qualities of mind they cannot be developed in a general sort of way. They are adverbial to the different modes of experience and can be properly developed only through initiation into and mastery of these modes of experience. Creativity without competence is cant; being critical without a mastery of some content and without training in argument is just being captious; autonomy without an informed awareness of possibilities is merely a romantic protest; and integrity without the discipline of a moral tradition is empty uplift.

## Notes

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# Index

- Abstract, ability to, 225  
Achievements, human, inheritance of, 22-3  
Action (*see also* Reasonable action and Behaviour)  
  belief and, 242-4, 337, 346-9, 356, 362  
  desire and, 472-3, 480-81  
  emotion and, 471-2, 480  
  rational, 403  
  reason and, 305, 308, 312-13, 317, 318-19, 329, 336-42  
  responsibility for, 332-7, 343-7  
  thought and, 179-84, 187  
Activity (*see also* Creativity)  
  anti-social, 13, 223  
  closed, 79  
  creative, 329  
  experimental, 28-9  
  group, 119, 121-2, 127-8  
  imaginative, 137  
  open-ended, 79  
Activity methods in teaching, 53  
Addiction, 335, 346  
Adulthood, apprenticeship for, 26-7, 35-42, 45-7, 49n., 123  
Aesthetics (*see also* Art and Creativity),  
  ethics and, 257  
  subjective, 247  
  theories of, 497-9, 500n.  
  twentieth century, 497  
Affection  
  child's need of, 59-60  
  reason and, 373  
Agreement  
  intersubjective, 256-8  
  rational, 171-4  
Alcoholism, responsibility and, 345-6  
Alienation, 129  
Alma Mater, 26  
Altruism, 120-21, 128  
Ambiguity, 251  
Analytic principles, 314-17  
Analytic reason, 316-19  
Anderson, John, 432n.  
Anger, 370, 374, 376, 379-82, 468, 470, 475  
Anscombe, Miss, 111n., 240  
Anti-social activities, 13, 223  
Apathy, 102  
Arbitrariness, 211-12  
Archambault, R. D., 50, 63n., 431n.  
Arieti, S., 219, 229n.  
Aristotle, 73, 84n., 92, 99, 107, 111n., 206n., 209, 227, 261-3, 270-72, 275, 437-8, 514  
Armstrong, W. H., 66, 83n.  
Arnold, Magda, 472-3, 482, 483n.  
Arnold, Matthew, 393  
Art  
  children's, 140-45  
  emotional education through, 484-99  
  experience of, 492, 497  
  freedom enhanced by, 495  
  indoctrination by, 496  
Asceticism, 101-2  
Asch, Solomon, 482  
Assent, real and notional, 362-3  
Assessable reasons, 336-43  
  responsibility and, 343-7  
Athenian education, 27; *see also* Greek education  
Atkinson, R. F., 431n.

- Atomic propositions, truth and, 260-61, 273-4
- Audio-visual aids, 44
- Aune, Bruce, 255
- Austin, J. L., 94n., 200, 277, 296-7, 483n.
- Australia, education in, 427
- Authoritarian education, 109, 419, 421-3
- Authoritarian society, 420, 423, 426-7
- Autonomy, personal, 116, 448-50, 453-6
- belief and, 456-9
- development of, 452, 462-3
- education and, 454, 459, 461-4
- freedom and, 450-52, 458
- humanities and, 519
- independence and, 449-50, 452-3, 464
- moral, 461-2
- reason and, 450, 456-9
- value of, 459-61
- Ayer, A. J., 148n., 276, 282, 285-6, 294, 296, 302n., 483n.
- Baby-care classes, 122, 126
- Bacon, Francis, 31, 42, 43, 45, 211, 476
- Baldwin, J. M., 507, 520n.
- Bantock, G. H., 95, 111n., 500n.
- Beardsley, M., 148n.
- Beatley, Ralph, 432
- Bedford, Errol, 388n.
- Behaviour (*see also* Action)
- acceptable, 121
- beliefs and, 230-31
- emotional, 375-6
- explanations of, 159-60, 376-7, 380
- intelligent, 209
- irrational, 219-23
- moral learning and, 506-7
- obsessive, 335
- passion and, 377, 380
- reasonable, 205, 209
- stupid, 214-15
- Behaviourism, 468, 483
- Being oneself, 77-9
- Belief, 19-21
- action, and, 242-4, 337, 346-9, 356, 362
- as assessable reason, 336-40, 343-5, 347
- autonomy and, 456-9
- behaviour and, 230-31
- behaviourist theory of, 240
- concepts of, 230-45
- desire and, 502-3
- duty of, 348, 360-61, 363-5
- economics of, 367
- emotion and, 92-3, 233-4, 312-13, 318, 369-71, 374-5, 378-9, 476-8
- ethics of, 366-7
- false and irrelevant, 232, 351, 476-8
- fear and, 233-4, 373-4, 378
- illness and, 516-17
- impossibility of, 349-55
- intuitive, 277-9
- low-level, 224
- paradigm cases of, 238, 243
- passion and, 312-13, 318, 372
- public language for, 237, 241-5
- reason and, 168-9, 173, 211-12, 305-11, 313, 316-17, 319n.
- reasonable, 306-7, 352, 359, 366
- reasons for, 161-2, 308-10
- true, 263-4, 351, 366
- truth and, 237, 242-3
- unformulated, 232
- unreasonable, 362, 365
- voluntary, 348, 355, 357, 359-64
- will and, 348-67
- Benn, S. I., 52-3, 63n.
- Bennett, J., 174n., 227n.
- Benson, J., 500n.
- Bentham, Jeremy, 76, 103
- Bereday, G. Z. F., 431n.
- Berkeley, G., 289
- Berlin, Sir Isaiah, 84n., 108, 112n.
- Bernstein, B., 225, 228n.
- Black, Max, 228n., 417
- Blyth, W. A. L., 119, 130n
- Bowlby, J., 59-61

- Bradley, F. H., 107, 112n., 294  
 Brain-washing, 249  
 Braithwaite, Prof., 366  
 Brim, O. G. Jr., 130n.  
 Britton, J., 144, 148n.  
 Brown, D. G., 303  
 Brown, R., 130n.  
 Brubacher, J. S., 431n.  
 Burke, E., 166  
 Burton, Ernest, 520n.  
 Butler, J., 323-7, 329-30
- Camus, A., 102-3, 106-7  
 Carnap, R., 276, 287  
 Casey, John, 499n.  
 Categories, 270-72, 274n.  
 Causes  
     desires and, 335, 338  
     identified by correlation, 60, 62  
     reason and, 308-11, 332-47  
 Caution, 210-11, 227, 328  
 Certainty, 283-4, 286  
 Character-building, 69, 133, 438,  
     448, 462, 481  
 Character-trait, being critical as,  
     418  
 Charity schools, 36-7  
 Chemistry, study of, 424  
 Child-centred education, 82, 95  
 Child-centred educationists, 65-6  
 Children  
     co-operative, 59-60  
     development of, 504-9  
     education and, 501, 503-5, 508  
     happy, 100, 108-9, 119  
     natural goodness of, 71-5, 78  
     needs of, 59-63  
         education and, 50-51, 54-8, 62  
     passions of, 226-7  
     rationality and, 209-11  
     rearing of, 10, 212, 225, 434, 452,  
         462  
 Chinese ideograms, 424  
 Chisholm (*Perceiving*), 230  
 Choice, notion of, 457  
 Chomsky, N., 503  
 Church schools, 35-6  
 Cohen, S. W., 432n.
- Coherence theory of  
     good will, 330  
     knowledge, 276, 294-5  
     truth, 260, 265-7, 294-5  
 Coleridge, S. T., 498  
 Colleges of Education, 10  
 Collingwood, R. G., 160, 488  
 Colour, perception of, 249-55  
 Comenius, 31  
 Committee on Higher Education  
     Report (1963), 44, 48, 49n.  
 Communication, education and,  
     395, 397, 399, 413-14, 462  
 Compulsory schooling, 9, 37  
 Concepts  
     elastic, 164-5  
     connexions between, 254-6, 258  
 Conditioning, 94, 362-3, 446, 454,  
     479  
     emotional, 496  
 Conduct  
     acquiring standards of, 435-41  
     controls of, 70  
     rules of, 20-21, 28  
 Conformity, 121, 124, 129  
 Continuity in educational growth,  
     79-80  
 Controversial issues and teaching,  
     429  
 Co-occurrence, constraints upon,  
     195, 199  
 Co-operation, childhood, 59-60  
 Copernicus, 209  
 Correlation identifying cause, 60, 62  
 Courtesy, 419  
 Cratylus, 272  
 Creative activity, spontaneous, 329  
 Creative faculty, 133  
 Creativity, 513-14, 519  
     aesthetic, 139-47  
     checked, 133  
     concept of, 132, 145  
     in education, 136-47  
     logic of, 134-6  
     teachers and, 141-7  
     tests of, 132, 137-8  
 Crime, 80, 114  
     of passion, 223

- Critical ability, as skill, 419  
 Critical appreciation, 409  
 Critical discussion, 420-21, 427, 430-31  
 Critical inquiry, opposition to, 421, 425-7  
 Critical spirit, teaching, 415-31  
 Critical thought, 417, 423, 512-14, 519  
 Criticism, habitual, 416  
 Critico-creative thinking, 423-6, 428  
 Croce, B., 488  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 510, 513  
 Cultivated person, 9  
 Curiosity, 226, 324, 477  
 Curriculum  
   absence of, 42  
   children's needs and, 50, 54, 55-7, 62  
   divisive, 40  
   human development and, 517-19  
*Curriculum of the Secondary School*, 63n.
- Daitz, E., 274n.
- Darwin, Charles, 209, 467-8
- Davies, B. D., 122, 131n.
- Dearden, R. F., 131n.
- Dember, W. N., 220, 229n., 474
- Democracy, 426
- Deprivation, maternal, 60
- Descartes, René, 157-8, 275, 503
- Desires  
   achieving, 102, 514  
   action and, 472-3, 480-81  
   assessable reasons and, 340-43  
   behaviour and, 231  
   belief and, 502-3  
   as causes, 335, 338  
   conflicting, 321-2, 325-6, 328-30  
   emotion and, 383, 472-4, 480  
   goodness and, 73-5  
   love and, 383  
   need and, 56, 58-9, 62  
   planning and, 322, 328-30, 514  
   reason and, 320-30  
   responsibility and, 333-4  
   unsatisfied, 227n.
- Determinism
- art and, 495-6  
   genetic, 70  
   growth and, 68-71, 73, 77  
   physical, 333-4
- Development, human, *see* Human development
- Development, personal, 501-3, 511-14  
   of autonomy, 452, 462-3  
   cognitive stage theory of, 504-7, 515-16  
   education and, 501, 503-5, 508, 518-19  
   mental health and, 514-18  
   reason and, 512, 515
- Dewey, John, 66-7, 71, 79-83, 84n., 393, 422, 489
- Dianoetic appraisal, 201-2, 206n.
- Disbelief, 349-54
- Disciplines, 406-8, 411-13
- Discovery, learning by, 28, 138-9, 455, 518
- Disputes,  
   reason and, 171-5  
   understanding and, 155-8
- Dogma, teaching and, 421-3
- Donnellan, Keith S., 206n.
- Doubt  
   Cartesian method of, 262  
   reasons for, 349-53
- Dreams, reality and, 504-5
- Drill, teaching by, 416-17
- Drugs, 479
- Dryden, John, 167
- Duhem, 276
- Durkheim, Emile, 113-20, 124, 130n., 506
- Duval, Roch, 431n.
- Edgley, Professor, 168, 175n., 465n.
- Educated man, 423
- Education (*see also* Curriculum, Learning, School and Teaching)  
   aims of, 3-4, 14-15, 88, 113-14, 117-18, 127-8  
   social, 119  
   apprenticeship to adult life, 26-7, 35-42, 45-7, 49n., 123

- authoritarian, 419, 421-3
- autonomy and, 448, 454, 459, 461-4
- child development and, 501, 503-5, 508
- child-centred, 82, 95
- children's needs and, 50-51, 54-8, 62-3
- communication and, 395, 397, 399, 413-14, 462
- concept of, 4-9, 14-16, 88-91
  - history of, 26-7
- conformity and, 121, 124, 129
- creativity in, 136-47
- definition of, 22-3, 26, 414
- destruction project, 27-33, 46-7
- diversity in, 115
- eighteenth century innovations, 35-7
- emotional, 92-3, 464, 474-83, 484-5
  - through art, 484-99
- equalitarianism in, 39-42, 46
- etymology, 8-10
- formal, 421-3, 427, 436, 449
- general, 14, 80, 394-9, 400
- government control of, 35, 37-8, 40, 44
- as growth, 67-84
- happiness and, 95-6, 108-11
- human development and, 21-2, 47, 501, 503-5, 508, 517-19
- indoctrination contrasted with, 416, 430-31, 496
- infant, 120
- justification of, 17, 88-92, 392, 394, 399, 402-4
- knowledge and, 5-9, 12, 16-17, 402
- liberal
  - concepts of, 391-5, 398-9, 402, 404, 413-14, 465n.
  - planning and practice, 408-14
  - value of, 392
- medieval, 27
- mental health and, 85-94, 147
- moral, 119-22, 125-6, 128-9, 396, 437-41, 444-5, 474, 481
  - as moral transaction, 19
  - need-reduction and, 58, 62
  - personal development and, 518-19
  - physical, 10
  - primary, 67, 120, 413, 464
  - rationality in, 174
  - reform and, 3-4, 10, 15
  - secondary, 50, 464
  - self-corruption of, 42
  - social, 119, 122-8
    - as social conditioning, 362-3
    - as social investment, 35-8, 47
  - socialization and, 34-9, 42, 44-8, 113-29
  - societies dependent on, 34
  - Spartan, 4-6, 8, 14
  - special, 14
  - specialized, 4, 12, 14, 80, 409, 412
  - substitutes for, 27-49
  - therapy and, 22, 89-91, 146-7
  - as transaction between generations, 22-3, 26, 47
  - understanding and, 5-9, 16-17, 23-4, 26, 29, 33, 45, 399, 408-13
  - values in, 5-7, 10-13, 16-17
- Education Bill 1821, 40
- Educationists, child-centred, 65-6
- Egoism, 80, 211
- Elastic concepts, 164-5
- Electric-shock, learning by, 22
- Eliot, George, 476
- Eliot, T. S., 486, 491, 500n.
- Emotional behaviour, 375-6
- Emotional freedom, 488-90, 494-5
- Emotional maturity, 86
- Emotional reactions, 220, 222, 225, 229n., 470-71, 473
- Emotional sincerity, 478-9
- Emotional vitality, 489-90, 496-8
- Emotions, 368-87, 486-7, 489; *see also* Affection, Anger, Fear, Hatred and Passion
  - absence of, 489-90, 498-9
  - action and, 471-2, 480
  - agent-directed, 369, 374, 377, 380-81

Emotions—*contd.*

- belief and, 369-71, 374-5, 378-9, 381, 476-8
- as cognition forms, 466-9, 484-5
- conditioning by, 496
- control of, 92, 480-82, 484-5
- development of, 516
- desire and, 383, 472-4, 480
- dispositional, 373-5, 379
- education of, 92-3, 464, 474-83, 484-5
  - through art, 484-99
- expression of, 467-8, 470-71, 480-82, 491
- mental, 368
- morals and, 474
- motives and, 469-70, 471-2, 480-81
- non-agent-directed, 369, 374
- objectivity and, 490
- occurrent, 373-5, 379
- passivity and, 469-71, 473, 485
- perception and, 488-9
- physical, 368
- psychology and, 466, 468, 474-5
- reason and, 204-5, 217, 371-3, 380-83, 387, 442, 487-8, 496
- recognition of, 478
- self-transcending, 480-81, 484
- sensations and, 371, 379-80, 387
- sublimation of, 482
- traditional view of, 368-9, 371-3, 380, 384-6
- word-use and, 384-6
- Empiricism, 280-81, 298
- Employees, desirable qualities, 123-4
- Entertaining a proposition, 236-8
- Environment
  - development and, 70
  - pernicious, 72-3
- Envy, 377, 379, 467-8, 471-2
- Epistemology, 276
  - ethics and, 257
- Equalitarianism, educational, 39-42, 46
- Exotic literature, 497
- Ethics, 13

- aesthetics and, 257
- of belief, 366-7
- conflation with science, 60-62
- educational, 16-17
- epistemology and, 257
- Greek, 6, 11, 73-4
- subjective, 247
- Etymology, 151
- Existentialism, 77, 450-51, 456-9, 493
- Experience (*see also* Empiricism)
  - compulsive, 238
  - development modes of, 508, 510-11, 513-17, 519
  - knowledge and, 162, 281, 286-7, 295, 297, 300-302
  - levels of, 220
  - systematization of, 163-5
  - testing of, 401, 405
  - truth and, 296-7
  - understanding of, 408-10, 413
- Experimental activity, 28-9
- Facility, 184-7
- Facts
  - knowledge of, 286
  - moral, 272
  - negative, 273
  - propositions and, 264-6
  - truth and, 263-8, 270-72
  - uses of word, 269-70
- Fallacy, 190-91
- Fear, 369, 377-9, 381, 467-8, 470, 472, 475
  - belief and, 233-4, 373-4, 378
  - reason and, 373, 378-9, 383
- Findlay, Professor, 232, 237-40, 243
- Fleming, C. M., 59-60, 63n.
- Flugel, J. C., 229n.
- France, education in, 36, 38, 41-3
- Fraternity, 128-9
- Free will, 332, 334, 346
- Freedom, 76-7
  - autonomy and, 450-51, 458
  - emotional, 488-90, 494-5
  - enhanced by art, 495
  - justification of, 108
- Frege, G., 280

## Index

- Freud, S., 94, 100, 219, 224-5,  
229n., 474, 476-7, 479, 511,  
514, 516
- Froebel, F. W. A., 66-8, 71
- Fromm, Erich, 96, 99, 111n., 121,  
449, 465n.
- Frye, N., 433n.
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 510, 513
- Geach, P., 73, 84n.
- General education, 14, 80, 394-9,  
400
- General Education in a Free Society*, 394,  
414n.
- Generalization, 160, 212, 225-6,  
297-8
- Genetic determinism, 70
- Germany, education in, 36, 38, 41-2
- Gesell, Arnold, 66, 68, 83n., 511
- Getzels, J. W., 432n.
- Gibson, A., 122, 131n.
- Giles, H. H., 55, 63n.
- Ginsberg, Morris, 194
- Gittins Report, 117
- Glock, Nancy, 18n.
- Good  
knowledge of, 6, 12, 17, 73-4  
pursuit of, 107, 391-2, 394-5, 404
- Good will, coherence theory of, 330
- Goodman, N., 276, 295
- Goodness (*see also* Virtue)  
natural, 71-5, 78  
want and, 73-5
- Gosling, J. C., 500n.
- Government, education and, 35,  
37-8, 40-41, 44
- Grammar schools, 27, 41-2
- Greek, study of, 43
- Greek ethics, 6, 11, 73-4
- Greek liberal education, 391-3, 404
- Green, T. H., 330
- Gresham College, 45
- Grice, G. R., 96, 104, 111n.
- Group activity, 119, 121-2, 127-8
- Group therapy, 49
- Growth  
conditions of, 59  
determinism and, 68-71, 73, 77  
education as, 67-84  
of mind, 114  
natural, 72  
notion of, 65  
social, 119-20  
true, 77  
value-criteria from, 75-81
- Growth theorists, 66-8, 81-3, 114,  
120
- Guilt, 475-6
- Gulbenkian Foundation Report on  
Education, 399, 414n.
- Habit, 415-16  
of criticism, 416  
generalization of, 506  
skill, and, 416
- Hadow Committee, 39, 41-2, 49n.
- Hale, Lionel, 433n.
- Hamlyn, D. W., 519n.
- Hampshire, S. N., 284, 286, 294,  
456-7, 488, 490, 496
- Happiness  
belief of, 105-6  
childhood, 100, 108-9, 119  
concept of, 96-101  
desire for, 323-7  
education and, 95-6, 108-11  
morality and, 103, 107  
pain and, 106  
in sacrifice, 103-4  
value of, 101-9  
as virtue, 107
- Hare, R. M., 17, 18, 433n., 457
- Hart, H. L. A., 119, 131n.
- Hartlib, S., 31
- Harvard Educational Review*, 50, 130n.
- Harvard Report on Education,  
394-9, 400, 402, 414n.
- Hatred, 379, 382-3
- Havighurst, R., 130n., 450, 465n.
- Health  
mental, *see* Mental health  
pursuit of, 324, 326-7
- Hedonism, 98-101, 323-4, 326-7
- Hegel, G. W. F., 457
- Hepburn, R. W., 500n.
- Herodotus, 520



- Heteronomy, 449, 454-5  
 Hillman, J., 500n.  
 Hirst, P. H., 462, 519, 520n.  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 48n., 320, 334-6, 347  
 Holmes, Edmond, 66, 70-72, 75, 83n., 84n.  
 Holt, J., 82, 84n.  
 Hope, 379  
 Housecraft classes, 122  
 Hudson, Liam, 109, 112n.  
 Hull, C. L., 50, 57-9, 62, 63n.  
 Human, learning to become, 47  
 Human development, 501-19; *see also* Development, personal education and, 21-2, 47, 501, 503-4, 505, 508, 517-19  
   mental health and, 515  
   in modes of experience, 508, 510-11, 513-17, 519  
   normative concept of, 511  
 Human nature, science of, 159  
 Human quality, education and, 21-2, 47  
 Humanism, Renaissance, 393  
 Humanities,  
   freedom and, 519  
   mental health and, 518  
   personal autonomy and, 519  
 Hume, D., 103-4, 168-9, 205, 208, 212-13, 276, 304-9, 312, 317, 320-21, 326, 328-30, 358, 362-3, 368, 372, 387, 510  
 Humour, learning, 442-3  
 Hutchins, R. M., 393, 432n.  
 Huxley, Aldous, 110  
 Huxley, Thomas, 49n.  
 Hypnosis, learning by, 22  
  
 Ibsen, H., 104-5  
 Idealism, 499  
 Idiosyncrasy, 248  
 Ilg, F. L., 83n.  
 Imitativeness, 446  
 Impartiality of reason, 155, 213  
 Impulse in school, 28  
 Independence, autonomy and, 449-50, 452-3, 464  
 Individualism, liberal, 451  
 Indoctrination, 249, 454  
   by art, 496  
   educational contrasted with, 416, 430-31, 496  
 Inductivism, 298  
 Industry, preparation for, 123-4  
 Infants' education, 120  
 Information retrieval, 429  
 Injections, learning by, 22  
 Inkeles, A., 122, 131n.  
 Innovation danger to totalitarian state, 426-7  
 Instructional methods, 425  
 Integrity, 512  
 Intelligence  
   measurement of, 41  
   reason and, 209-11  
   skill and, 514  
 Interaction, in education growth, 79  
 Interests, need and, 56  
 Inter-personal tests of reason, 155-8  
 Intuition, 4, 14, 186, 221, 277-81, 288  
 Irrational-conscientiousness, 450  
 Irrationality, 86-7, 92-3, 155, 177-8, 199, 206n., 219-23, 477, 480  
   unreasonableness and, 214-18, 225, 228n.  
 Irresponsibility, 60, 347  
  
 Jackson, Brian, 95, 111n.  
 Jaensch, 145  
 James, Henry, 476, 492  
 James, William, 212, 363, 368, 388n., 415-16, 489, 498-9  
 Jealousy, 217, 467, 469-71, 475, 516  
 Judgment  
   behaviour and, 376  
   belief and, 230, 234  
   moral, 272-3, 314-15  
   reason and, 304-5, 308  
   universality and, 315  
   value, 396, 399  
   warped, 221-2, 479-80  
 Justice and happiness, 104

## Index

- Justification, 90, 294-5, 299, 403  
  non-inferential, 280-81  
Justificatory reasons, 336
- Kafka, Franz, 490
- Kant, I., 100, 104, 107, 111n., 151,  
  154, 158, 251, 256, 323, 326,  
  330, 331n., 334-5, 342, 345,  
  347, 448, 455-6, 461, 503, 506
- Kay, W., 83n.
- Keats, John, 174
- Keeness, 445
- Kenny, A., 108, 111n., 112n.
- Kerlinger, Fred N., 431n.
- Kilpatrick, W. H., 119, 130n.
- Klein, Josephine, 225, 228n., 229n.
- Knowledge  
  belief and, 236, 239-40, 277  
  coherence theory of, 276, 294-5  
  corrigibilist theory of, 302  
  definition of, 278  
  education and, 5-9, 12, 16-17, 402  
  experience and, 162, 281, 286-7,  
  295, 297, 300-302  
  fallibilist theory of, 302  
  fields of, 407-8, 412  
  forms of, 397, 402-3, 405-8,  
  410-11, 413  
  foundations of, 275-302  
  negative views, 295-8  
  of good, 6, 12, 17, 73-4  
  intuitive, 4, 14  
  lack of, 86-7  
  mind development and, 400, 402  
  moral, 407-8, 506-7  
  phenomenal theory, 286-94  
  pursuit of, 391-2, 402-4, 406, 408  
  reality and, 393-4, 402-3  
  reason and, 392  
  symbolic expression of, 401, 405
- Koestler, A., 471, 480, 483n.
- Köhler, W., 322
- Kohlberg, L., 504-9, 517, 519n.,  
  520n.
- Komisar, B. P., 55, 63n.
- Language (*see also* Communication)  
  private, 296  
  public, beliefs and, 237, 241-5  
  reason and, 212, 225  
  truth and, 269  
  understanding and, 246, 249-51,  
  285, 401
- Language laboratories, 44
- Languages  
  mother tongue, 435, 439-40  
  study of, 25, 42-4, 49n., 114, 424,  
  427-8  
  written, 424
- Latin, study of, 40, 33, 49n., 433n.
- Lauwerys, J. A., 431n.
- Lawrence, D. H., 487, 494
- Learning  
  autonomy and, 464  
  definition of, 26  
  by discovery, 28, 138-9, 455, 518  
  forms of, 437  
  individualized, 448  
  meaning, 293  
  methods of, 22, 93-4, 118  
  motivation of, 50, 56, 58-9, 62,  
  82-3  
  need reduction theory of, 57-9, 62  
  play by-product, 23-4  
  political, 118, 125  
  to read, 24  
  by study, 23-4, 47-8  
  theories of, 50-51, 57-9, 62  
  understanding and, 23-4
- Leeper, R. W., 468-9, 472, 483n.
- Leibniz, G. W., 163, 165, 503
- Leonardo da Vinci, 135
- Levels  
  experience 220  
  life, 218-27  
  reactions, 220-21
- Lewis, C. I., 276, 282-3, 286
- Liberal education, *see* Education,  
  liberal
- Liberal individualism, 451
- Liberty, *see* Freedom
- Life, levels of, 218-27
- Literature, 144, 146  
  emotional education through,  
  488-92, 494-5, 497, 499-500n.  
  erotic, 497

- Little, I. M. D., 331n.  
 Locke, John, 250, 258n., 262-3, 276, 433n., 461, 503  
 Logic  
   coherence theory and, 294  
   of creativity, 134-6  
   normativity of, 167-9, 313, 316  
   psychology and, 167-8  
   reason and, 313-14, 318-19  
 Logical positivism, 162, 282  
 Logical thought, 398, 400, 410  
 Logical truth, 166  
 Love, 382-3, 473  
 Lowenfeld, M., 145  
 Luria, A. R., 225  
  
 Mabbott, J., 210, 224, 227n.  
 Mace, C. A., 51, 62n.  
 MacIntyre, A. C., 111n., 421  
 MacRae, Ronald G., 131n.  
 Malcolm, Norman, 258n., 483n.  
 Mannheim, Karl, 194  
 Maritain, J., 393  
 Marshall, G. D., 500n.  
 Maternal deprivation, 60  
 Mathematician, creative, 138-9  
 Mathematics, study of, 406, 432n.  
 Maturity, emotional, 86  
 Maturity theory of moral development, 505  
 May, Hartshorne, 506  
 Mead, G. H., 212, 507  
 Meaning  
   elements of, 280  
   learning, 293  
 Meddleton, I. G., 432n.  
 Memory, *despised*, 28  
 Mental activity, *see* Thought  
 Mental development, 502, 507-10  
 Mental emotions, 368  
 Mental health, 433n.  
   criteria of, 85  
   education and, 85-94, 147  
   emotions and, 475  
   humanities and, 518  
   personal development and, 514-18  
 Mental structure, levels of, 502-3  
  
 Middle class reasoning, 212  
 Mill, J. S., 98, 103, 105, 107-8, 111n., 112n., 258, 276, 281, 326-7, 330, 490, 498  
 Milton, John, 31  
 Mind (*see also* Development, personal and Thought)  
   development of, 114, 392-3, 395, 398, 400, 402-4, 406, 408, 414n.  
   training of, 133-4  
   will, feelings and, 442  
 Money-Kirle, R., 483n.  
 Montague, R., 111n.  
 Moore, G. E., 72, 104, 172, 292-4, 302n., 327  
 Moral autonomy, 461-2  
 Moral development, 505-12  
   education and, 508  
 Moral education, 119-22, 125-6, 128-9, 396, 437-41, 444-5, 474, 481  
 Moral facts, 272  
 Moral judgments, 272-3, 314-15  
 Moral knowledge, 407-8, 506-7  
 Moral obligation, belief as, 348, 354-8, 360-61, 363-5  
 Moral principles, 13, 16-17, 119  
 Moral skills, 125-6  
 Moral standards  
   autonomy and, 461-2  
   learning, 435-40, 444-5  
 Moral understanding, 410  
 Morality, 78, 118  
   happiness and, 103, 107  
   reasonable, 205  
   social, 80  
 Morals, emotions and, 474  
 Morris-Jones, H., 500n.  
 Mortimore, G., 17n.  
 Motivation  
   in learning, 50, 56, 58-9, 62, 82-3  
   levels of life and, 220, 225  
 Motives  
   development of, 516  
   emotion and, 469-70, 471-2, 480-81  
 Musical emotion, 492  
 Mussen, P., 130n.

## Index

- Nagel, Ernest, 502-3, 519n.  
National Society, 36-7, 49n.  
National Union of Teachers, 50, 63n.  
Needs  
    children's, 59-63  
        education and, 50-51, 54-8, 62-3  
    concepts of, 51-5, 62  
    desires and, 56, 58-9, 62  
    individual, 57  
    interests and, 56  
    reduction of, 57-9, 62  
    social norms and, 52-5, 60, 62  
    social-psychological, 59-61  
    special, 57  
    value-free concept of, 62  
    want and, 56, 58-9, 62  
Neoplatonism, 499  
Neugarten, B., 130n.  
Neurath, O., 288  
Newman, J. H., 352, 362, 367n., 393  
Newsom Report, 49n.  
Nietzsche, F. W., 48n., 105, 111n.  
Nisbet, Robert A., 127-8, 130n.  
Nisbet, S., 131n.  
Norms (*see also* Standards)  
    deviation from, 419  
    social, need and, 52-5, 60, 62  
    understanding and, 254  
Nostalgia, 484-5  
Nowell-Smith, P. H., 414n., 432n.  
Nunn, Sir Percy, 67, 71-2, 79, 84n.  
Oakeshott, M., 113, 129n., 131n., 413, 414n.  
Objectivity, 246-58  
    colour judgments and, 249-55  
    definition, 246-9  
    emotion and, 490  
    fostering, 476-7  
    reason and, 152, 211  
    truth and, 246-9, 258, 271-3  
Observer, 126  
Obsessive behaviour, 335  
Opinion, belief and, 236  
Originality, 141-2, 148n., 418  
Orwell, G., 248-9  
Osborne, H., 500n.  
Over-protectiveness, 60  
Pain  
    absence of, 323, 326-7  
    behaviour and, 252-5  
    belief and, 235, 240  
    concept of, 230  
    happiness and, 106  
Painting, abstract, 141  
Paranoia, 221, 480, 515  
Pareto, V., 328  
Parish schools, 36-7, 41  
Park, Joe, 431n.  
Pascal, B., 362  
Passion (*see also* Emotions)  
    behaviour and, 377, 380  
    belief and, 312-13, 318, 372  
    children's, 226-7  
    crimes of, 223, 335  
    disinterested, 213  
    natural, 227  
    personal development and, 516  
    philosophical conception of, 213-14, 222  
    rational, 225-7  
    reason and, 168, 208-27, 312-13, 320-21  
    for truth, 213-14, 226  
    turbulence and, 213-14  
Passivity,  
    control of, 479-82  
    emotions and, 469-71, 473  
Passmore, J., 432n., 519  
Paton, Professor, 326, 330  
Pears, D. F., 134  
Peck, R. F., 450, 465n.  
Peel, E. A., 58-9, 63n.  
Peer group and moral development, 506  
Peirce, C. S., 195, 276  
Perception, 286-92  
    clouded, 479-80  
    colour, 249-55  
    emotion and, 488-9  
Performative utterances, 231  
Permissiveness, 109

- Personal development, *see* Development, personal
- Peters, R. S., 18, 52, 63n., 64n., 84n., 85, 94n., 131n., 148n., 228n., 229n., 423, 429, 465n., 483n., 520n.
- Peterson, A. D. C., 399-400
- Philosophy, 156-8, 170, 173, 174n., 192-3, 482
- Physical education, 10
- Physicalism, 282
- Piaget, J., 66, 448-9, 465n., 475, 504-6, 508-9, 516-17, 520n.
- Pirandello, L., 152
- Pitcher, G., 500n.
- Planning, desire and, 322, 328-30, 514
- Platitudes, rediscovered, 167
- Plato, 12, 70, 73, 84n., 92, 103, 116, 145, 151-2, 158, 208, 224, 227, 272, 320, 323, 326, 418, 425-6, 434-5, 438, 442, 488, 495, 503
- Play  
group, 122, 127  
learning by, 23-4
- Pleasure, 96, 99-101, 323-7
- Plowden Report, 67, 77-8, 96, 449
- Political learning, 118, 125
- Politics, education and, 40
- Polytechnics, 37, 46
- Popper, K. R., 276, 298-302
- Pornography, 497
- Positivism, 165, 167, 175n., 295  
logical, 162, 282
- Practical reason, 156, 178-9, 184, 192-3, 303-19
- Practice, theory distinguished from, 303-4, 305, 312-14, 317
- Prejudice, 248, 358
- Present, reason and, 210-11, 223
- Price, H. H., 235, 276, 282-4, 286, 294, 302
- Pride, 467-8, 475
- Priestman, O. B., 84n.
- Primary education, 67, 120, 413, 464
- Primary Education*, 50, 63n., 119, 130n.
- Primary Education in Scotland*, 50, 63n., 67, 95-6, 111n.
- Primary Education in Wales*, 67, 130n.
- Primitive man, way of thought, 219
- Probability, 283-6
- Problems, teaching by, 428-9
- Progressive schools, 109, 425
- Propositions  
atomic, truth and, 260-61, 273-4  
facts and, 264-6  
general, 281  
molecular, 281  
protocol, 281-2
- Proust, M., 490, 492
- Prudence, *see* Caution
- Prussia, education in, 36
- Psycho-analysis, 94, 477-8, 516
- Psychology  
educational, 50, 54, 59-62, 482  
emotions and, 466, 468, 474-5  
faculty, 133-4  
logic and, 167-8  
scientific, 159, 162  
social, 480
- Psychopath, 222-3
- Public schools, 27, 46
- Quine, Willard Van Orman, 276
- Ramsey, I. T., 169
- Rashdall, H., 107, 112n.
- Ratiocination, 177-8, 184, 191
- Rational action, 403
- Rational agreement, 171-4
- Rationality, 101, 155, 159, 176, 179-84, 209, 400  
children and, 209-11  
definition of, 194-5  
development of, 187-8, 192, 211  
in education, 174  
reasonableness and, 223-4
- Reactions  
emotional, 220, 222, 225, 229n., 470-71, 473  
levels of, 220-21  
thought and, 179-84
- Read, Herbert, 140-41, 143, 145, 148n.

## Index

- Reading, 24  
Realism, 393-4, 404  
    classical, 402  
Reality  
    dreams and, 504-5  
    knowledge and, 383-4, 402-3  
Reasonable, use of word, 195-200  
Reasonable action, 197-9  
    analysis of, 201-6  
    paradigm cases of, 200-201,  
    203-4, 206n.  
Reasonableness  
    definition of, 194-5  
    rationality and, 223-4  
    teaching, 477  
Re-education, 477-8  
Reform  
    education and, 3-4, 10, 15  
    educational, 47  
Reichenbach, Hans, 276  
Relationships, human, 20-21,  
    126-8, 491  
Religious instruction, 38  
Religious wars, 355  
Renan, Ernest, 49n.  
Responsibility, 332-7, 346-7  
    assessable reasons and, 343-7  
Responsible person, 346-7  
Rieff, Philip, 511, 520n.  
Riesman, David, 450  
Robinson, E., 45, 48n.  
Roe, E., 432n.  
Roman Empire, schools of, 27  
Rousseau, J.-J., 43, 58, 66, 72, 84n.  
Russell, Bertrand, 134-5, 213, 250,  
    263-4, 266, 275-6, 281-2, 294,  
    474, 483n.  
Russia, education in, 40; *see also*  
    Union of Soviet Socialist Re-  
    publics  
Ryle, G., 133-4, 226, 229n., 282  
Sacrifice, happiness in, 103-4  
Sadism, 497  
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 94, 457-8, 473,  
    478, 483n.  
Scepticism, 168  
Schiller, F., 490, 496-7  
Schizophrenia, 220, 515  
Schonell, F. J., 432n.  
School (*see also* Education, Curri-  
    culum and Teaching)  
    apparatus, 25  
    authoritarian, 109, 419, 421-3  
    charity, 36-7  
    concept of, 23-7  
        attempts to destroy, 27-35, 42  
        corruption of, 27-33  
    ecclesiastical, 35  
    good, marks of, 26  
    grammar, 27, 41-2  
    history of, 26-7  
    impulse in, 28  
    instructional methods in, 425  
    medieval, 27  
    parish, 36-7, 41  
    progressive, 109, 425  
    public, 27, 46  
    secondary, 41, 49n.  
    socializing agency, 113  
    substitutes for, 27-48  
    teachers indispensable to, 25  
    technical, 37, 42  
    trade, 37  
*School Review*, 520n.  
Schooling, compulsory, 9, 37  
Schools Council Working Papers,  
    49n., 123-4, 131n.  
Schopenhauer, A., 68-70, 72, 102,  
    111n.  
Science  
    *a priori* role in, 162, 164-5  
    conflation with ethics, 60-62  
    exact, 164  
    of human nature, 159, 162  
    paradigm case of reason, 210-11  
    study of, 398, 406, 410  
    teaching of, 42-3, 49n., 424  
*Science, Government and Information*,  
    432n.  
Scottish Education Department, 50  
Searle, 457  
Secondary education, 50, 464  
*Secondary Education*, 63n.  
Secondary schools, 41, 47n.  
Self-direction, 448, 451-2, 455, 464

- Self-expression, 77-9  
 Self-knowledge, 456, 463  
 Self-love, 323-9  
 Self-realization, 75-7, 120, 330  
 Sensations and emotions, 371, 379-80, 387  
 Senses, deceptive, 157-8  
 Sensitization to standards, 13  
 Sentimentality, 487-8  
 Sex roles, preparation for, 122, 125  
 Shakespeare, W., 135, 430, 486, 499n., 500n.  
 Shand, A., 475  
 Shlick, M., 276, 282, 288, 295  
 Shores, J. H., 63n.  
 Short, L. N., 432n.  
 Sidgwick, H., 210, 227n.  
 Sincerity, emotional, 478-9  
 Skills, 417-18, 427-8  
     critical ability and, 419  
     habit and, 416  
     intelligence and, 514  
     moral, 125-6  
     social, 36-7, 118, 124-6, 129  
     teaching, 420-21  
     training in, 436-8, 445  
 'Sleep-learning', 22  
 Smart, J. J., 258n.  
 Smith, B. O., 63n.  
 Social conditioning, 362-3  
 Social development, 117-20, 127  
 Social education, 119, 122-8  
 Social mobility, education and, 16  
 Social morality, 80  
 Social norms, need and, 52-5, 60, 62  
 Social psychology, 480  
 Social science, 43, 117, 130n.  
 Social skills, 36-7, 118, 124-6, 129  
 Social stimulation, 509  
 Socialization  
     definition of, 117-18  
     education and, 34-9, 42, 44-8, 113-29  
     moral development and, 505-6  
 Socializing agency, school as, 113  
 Society  
     dependence on education, 34  
     initiation into, 115-16  
     rules of, 119-21  
 Sociology  
     educational, 54, 61, 482  
     scientific, 162  
 Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 36  
 Socrates, 12-13, 17, 73, 102-3, 425, 434, 437-40, 444-6, 448, 509  
 Solipsism, 168  
 Sophists, 425  
 Spartan, educated, 14  
 Spartan education, 4-6, 8, 14  
 Spelling, 424  
 Spens Report, 50  
 Spinoza, 101, 107, 111n., 112n., 157-8, 225, 455-7, 461, 478, 479  
 Standards (*see also* Norms)  
     of conduct, 435-41  
     moral, 435-40, 444-5, 461-2  
     need and, 52-5, 60, 62  
     sensitization to, 13  
     understanding and, 254  
 Stanley, W. O., 63n.  
 Steiner, G., 500n.  
 Steiner, Rudolf, 71  
 Stendhal, 500n.  
 Stimulation, teaching by, 509, 518  
 Stoicism, 101-2, 451  
 Strawson, P. F., 119, 131n., 169-70, 266, 274n., 281  
 Stupid behaviour, 214-15  
 Subjectivity, 258n.  
 Sublimation, 482  
 Survival, learning for, 57  
 Systematization, reason and, 162-5  
 Tanner, M., 500n.  
 Tautology, 166-7  
 Taylor, C., 63n.  
 Taylor, P. W., 53, 63n.  
 Teacher (*see also* School)  
     creativity and, 144-7  
     criticism by, 419  
     criticism of, 430  
     difficulties of, 77-80  
     example of, 419

- Unity of reason, 153-5, 158, 160, 171-4
- Universality, 314-19
- Universities
  - criticism in, 425-7
  - function of, 46, 49n.
  - government control of, 40-41
  - self-corruption of, 44
  - technical colleges and, 42
- Unreasonableness, 196-9, 223-5
  - irrationality and, 214-18, 225, 228n.
  - paradigm cases of, 200-201
- Urmson, J. O., 103, 111n., 203, 207n., 388n.
- Utilitarianism, 326, 328
- Values, discrimination among, 395-6, 399
- Vesey, G. N., xiv
- Vienna Circle, 282
- Virtue (*see also* Good)
  - happiness as, 107
  - learning, 446-7
  - teaching, 434-47
- Want, *see* Desires and Needs
- War, religious, 355
- Warr, E. B., 119, 130n.
- Werner, 219
- Westminster College, 45
- Wheeler, S., 130n.
- White, A. R., 274n.
- Wild, John, 432n.
- Wilkinson, R., 433n.
- Will, 222-3
  - belief and, 348-67
  - freedom of, 332, 334, 346
  - mind and, 442
  - strength of, 512
- Williams, B. A. O., 259n.
- Wilson, Harold, 216
- Wilson, John, 94n., 483n.
- Winch, P., 131n.
- Wishes, *see* Desires
- Wishful thinking, 219, 348
- Wittgenstein, L. J. J., 16, 154, 157, 171-3, 246, 251-3, 255, 260-61, 264-6, 273, 274n., 276, 280-82, 288-9, 296, 384, 387, 388n.
- Wootton, Barbara, 61, 64n.
- Wordsworth, W., 174
- Working class, reason and, 212
- Wright, G. H. von, 98, 111n.
- Young, P. T., 61, 64n., 469, 472
- Zen, 202